

North Rhine-Westphalia



With a population greater than that of Austria and Switzerland combined, North Rhine-Westphalia feels almost like a country unto itself. Cobbled together in 1946 by the Allies from two Prussian provinces and a little fiefdom called Lippe-Detmold, it harbours within its boundaries flat, windswept expanses and forested hills high enough to hold onto snow during winter. Villages sweetly lost in time contrast with frenzied metropolises habitually on fast-forward. There are places whose looks have remained largely unchanged since the Middle Ages and others fashioned completely from scratch in the wake of WWII. And through it all carves the muscular Rhine, fed by tributaries such as the Ruhr that gave an entire region its name.

The industrial age has shaped North Rhine-Westphalia more than any other German region. For about a hundred years, coal and steel fuelled the growth of Germany into one of Europe's most powerful nations. But starting in the mid-1960s, lower demand forced the region to focus its energies elsewhere. And so it did, banking instead on hi-tech, media, retail and culture.

Must-sees include Cologne with its lofty Dom (cathedral), Bonn with its Beethoven legacy and fabulous museums, the Unesco-listed baroque palaces in Brühl, and Charlemagne's imperial capital of Aachen. The lively Ruhrgebiet and placid Lower Rhine are best for off-beat experiences. There are historical cities like Münster, where the treaty that ended the Thirty Years' War was signed, and elegant ones like Düsseldorf, the state capital. Paderborn and Soest are treasured for their churches and the Sauerland is the place to get your nature fix.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Spiritual Delight** Feel like an ant when looking up at the majestic loftiness of Cologne's Dom (cathedral; p551)
- **Party Town** Toast your health with a glass or 10 of refreshing *Altbier* (old beer) in a characterful and character-filled Altstadt beer hall (p546) in Düsseldorf
- **Palace Dreams** Learn about life at court on a tour of Schloss Augustusburg (p561) in Brühl
- **Off-Beat Adventure** Free-climb and dive in a former iron works in Duisburg, now the Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord (p579)
- **Quirk Factor** Visit a Rapunzel-style palace and a nuclear power plant turned theme park in Kalkar (p549)
- **Culture Fix** Visit Bonn (p561) to pay your respects to Beethoven and see how Germany's old capital has reinvented itself



■ POPULATION: 10.7 MILLION

■ AREA: 34,080 SQ KM



Getting Around

For getting around North Rhine-Westphalia by public transport several ticket deals are available. The **SchönerTagTicket** is valid for one day of travel anywhere within the state on local and regional public transport from 9am to 3am the following day (midnight to 3am the next day on weekends). You can only use RE, IRE, RB and S-Bahn trains as well as buses, U-Bahn and trams. The ticket costs €21 for single travellers and €27 for groups of up to five people (or one or both parents or grandparents plus all their children or grandchildren up to 14 years). There's also the **SchöneFahrtTicket** (€13.20), which is good for any one-way trip within the state. Tickets are available at train station ticket offices and from vending machines.

THE RHINELAND

DÜSSELDORF

☎ 0211 / pop 572,000

Düsseldorf, the state capital, dazzles with boundary-pushing architecture, zinging nightlife and an art scene to rival many larger cities. It's a posh and modern city that seems all business at first glance: banking, advertising, fashion and telecommunications are among the fields that have made Düsseldorf one of Germany's wealthiest cities. Yet all it takes is a few hours of bar-hopping around the Altstadt, the historical quarter along the Rhine, to realise that locals have no problem letting their hair down once those Armani ties come off.

The Altstadt may still be the 'longest bar in the world' but it's increasingly getting competition from the Medienhafen, a redeveloped harbour area about 1km further south. Not only is this a feast of international avant-garde architecture by the genre's boldest and brightest (Frank Gehry among them), the area is also evolving into a chic and sleek place to hang out after dark.

If you're more into high-brow culture, you'll likely more than get your fill at the many top-notch art museums and the renowned opera house, theatre and orchestra hall.

Orientation

The airport is about 7km north of the Altstadt (old quarter), see p547 for details about getting into town. The Hauptbahnhof (main train station) is on the southeastern edge of the city centre. From here it's about a 20-minute walk along Bismarckstrasse and Blumenstrasse to the Königsallee, with the Altstadt just beyond. Alternatively, take any U-Bahn (underground train) from the Hauptbahnhof to the Heinrich-Heine-Allee stop to be right in the heart of things.

Information BOOKSHOPS

Buchhaus Stern-Verlag (☎ 388 10; Friedrichstrasse 24-26; ☎ 9.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-6pm Sat) Three floors of books, with a café and internet access.

DISCOUNT CARDS

Düsseldorf Welcome Card (single per 24/48/72hr €9/14/19, group €18/28/38) Available at hotels and the tourist offices, this card buys unlimited public transport and discounts for museums, tours and cultural venues.

EMERGENCY

After-hour medical emergencies (☎ 192 92)

Dental emergencies (☎ 666 291)

Municipal Lost & Found (☎ 899 3285)

INTERNET ACCESS

Buchhaus Stern-Verlag (☎ 388 10; Friedrichstrasse 24-26; per 15min €1; ☎ 9.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-6pm Sat)

MONEY

American Express (☎ 385 0069; Immermannstrasse 65b; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) Inside the Hauptbahnhof tourist office.

Reisebank (☎ 364 878; Hauptbahnhof; ☎ 7am-10pm Mon-Sat, 8am-9pm Sun)

POST

Post office (Konrad-Adenauer-Platz 1; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Extended hours apply during major trade shows.

Altstadt tourist office (☎ 1720 2840; Burgplatz; ☎ 11am-6pm)

Finanzkaufhaus tourist office (☎ 1720 2841; Berliner Allee 33; ☎ 10am-6pm)

Hauptbahnhof tourist office (☎ 1720 2844; Immermannstrasse 65b; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm)

Dangers & Annoyances

Düsseldorf is a safe city overall, although the area around the Hauptbahnhof attracts a murky element, especially after dark. The same is true of the city parks. Just pay extra attention and you should be fine.

Sights

ALTSTADT

Düsseldorf's quaint Altstadt, a mostly pedestrianised web of lanes hugging the Rhine, is rightly (in)famous for its raucous nightlife. Fortunately, it also brims with charming and quiet corners, a smattering of museums and historical sights, and good shopping.

At its centre is the historic Marktplatz, framed by the Renaissance **Rathaus** (town hall; 1573) and accented by an equestrian **statue of Jan Wellem**. The art-loving elector lies buried nearby in the early baroque **Andreaskirche** (Andreasstrasse 27; ☎ church 7.30am-6pm, mausoleum 3-5.30pm Mon-Fri), a bright, galleried church founded by Jesuits in 1629. The mausoleum, life-size apostle sculptures and fanciful stucco-ornamented ceiling are all fine features. Free organ concerts take place on Sundays at 4.30pm.

A few steps west is the memorial **Mahn-und Gedenkstätte für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus** (Memorial Exhibit to the Victims of the Nazi Regime; ☎ 899 6205; Mühlenstrasse 29; admission free; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Fri & Sun, 1-5pm Sat), with an important but academic exhibit on local persecution and resistance during the Third Reich. Leaflets in English may be borrowed at no charge.

North of here looms the twisted tower of the 14th-century **St Lambertuskirche** (Church of St Lambert; Stiftsplatz), which is filled with treasures from several centuries. Look for the Gothic tabernacle, the Renaissance marble tombs, baroque altars and modern windows.

DÜSSELDORF

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Just beyond, on Burgplatz, the **Schlossurm** (Palace Tower) is all that's left of the electors' palace, which burned down in 1872. It now houses the **Schiffahrt Museum** (Navigation Museum; ☎ 899 4195; adult/child/concession €3/free/1.50; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Sun) with neat multimedia exhibits chronicling Rhine shipping from Roman days until today. The 4th-floor café offers panoramic views.

Burgplatz marks the beginning of the **Rheinuferpromenade** (river walk), whose cafés and benches fill with people in fine weather, creating an almost Mediterranean flair. It follows the Rhine all the way to the Rheinpark and the 240m **Rheinturm** (Rhine Tower; Stromstrasse 20; lift €3.30) with a viewing platform and revolving restaurant at 172m. Just beyond are the **Landtag** (the state parliament) and the old harbour, which has been redeveloped into the Medienhafen (Media Harbour; see right), a spectacular showcase of contemporary architecture.

Along the Rheinuferpromenade you'll pass the ornate Palais Nesselrode (Nesselrode Palace), where the **Hetjens Museum** (☎ 899 4210; Schulstrasse 4; adult/concession €4/2; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue & Thu-Sun, 11am-9pm Wed) provides a survey of 8000 years of ceramic art from around the world. An extension houses the **Filmmuseum** (☎ 899 2232; adult/concession €3/1.50; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue & Thu-Sun, 11am-9pm Wed), which trains the spotlight on the technology, history and mystery of movie-making. The integrated Black Box art-house cinema presents cutting-edge films in the original language (separate admission).

For a literary kick swing by the **Heinrich Heine Institut** (☎ 899 5571; Bilker Strasse 12-14; adult/concession €3/1.50; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Fri & Sun, 1-5pm Sat), where letters, portraits, first editions and manuscripts document this famed Düsseldorf-er's career. **Heine's birth house** at Bolkerstrasse 53 now contains a literary bookshop, café and reading room.

ART MUSEUMS

Düsseldorf has long had a love affair with art and has several high-calibre museums to prove it.

If you only have time for one museum, zero in on the **K20 Kunstsammlung am Grabbeplatz** (☎ 838 1130; Grabbeplatz 5; adult/concession/family €6.50/4.50/15; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun), housed behind an undulating shiny black façade. Walls brim with post-WWII art, most notably a stunning Paul Klee collection along

with select works by Picasso, Matisse, Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns and Düsseldorf's own Joseph Beuys. The biggest crowds turn out for the top-notch temporary exhibitions. A combination ticket with K21 (below) costs €10/8, including audio-guide.

Immediately south, the **Kunsthalle** (Art Hall; ☎ 899 6243; www.kunsthalle-duesseldorf.de; Grabbeplatz 4; admission prices vary; ☎ noon-7pm Tue-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun) is renowned for its outstanding temporary art and photography shows.

Never mind the dull name, the **NRW-Forum Kultur und Wirtschaft** (NRW Forum for Culture & Economics; ☎ 892 6690; www.nrw-forum.de; adult/concession €5.50/3.50; ☎ 11am-8pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, 11am-midnight Fri) targets the lifestyle-savvy crowd with exhibits on fashion, media, design and architecture. Hip factors: palmtop-sized audio-guides and a video lounge.

Nearby, the once stuffy **museum kunst palast** (☎ 892 4242; www.museum-kunst-palast.de; Ehrenhof 5; admission varies; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Sun) now takes an unconventional approach to presenting its well-respected collection. Old masters find themselves juxtaposed with contemporary young dogs and non-Western works to reveal unexpected connections between the ages and artistic trends. Temporary exhibitions further reinforce the theme.

For art so new that the paint has barely dried, you have to travel south to the **K21 Kunstsammlung im Ständehaus** (☎ 838 1630; Ständehausstrasse 1; adult/concession/family €6.50/4.50/15; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun). The former 19th-century state parliament building brims with canvases, photographs, installations and video art ranging from fabulous to frivolous. The international cast of artists includes Sigmar Polke, local boy Thomas Schütte and the late Nam June Paik. Combination tickets with the K20 (left) are €10/8, including audio-guide.

MEDIENHAFEN

South of the Altstadt, the once-dead old harbour area has been reborn as the **Medienhafen** (Media Harbour), an increasingly lively quarter filled with bold architecture, restaurants, bars and clubs. Crumbling warehouses turned hi-tech office buildings rub shoulders with bold new structures by celebrated international architects. The most eye-catching is the **Neuer Zollhof**, an ensemble of three warped and dynamically curving buildings typical of Frank Gehry's sculptural approach. Moored nearby

is Claude Vasconi's **Grand Bateau**, built to resemble an ocean liner. A new pedestrian bridge links to another quay where William Alsop has created **Colorium** with its Mondrian-inspired façade and springboardlike red roof. A few doors down a plain structure is enlivened by an 'invasion' of **Flossies** – giant candy-coloured stick figures clambering all over its façade. Ask about an information booklet (€5) or guided tours at the tourist offices.

KÖNIGSALLEE & HOFGARTEN

The main *raison d'être* of Düsseldorf's most famous thoroughfare, the **Königsallee** (Kö for short) is to help you spend your hard-earned cash in its exclusive boutiques and department stores. Otherwise there's little of actual merit here, although the Art Nouveau façade of the **Kaufhof** department store and the landmark **Triton fountain** deserve a glance.

When you've had your shopping fill, head on over to the pleasant **Hofgarten** (palace garden) dotted with statues of Heinrich Heine, Robert Schumann and other German greats. Thespians might get a kick out of the **Theatermuseum** (☎ 899 4660; Jägerhofstrasse 1; adult/concession €3/1.50; ☎ 1-8.30pm Tue-Sun), which looks back on Düsseldorf's centuries-old theatre tradition and has a collection of marionettes and paper toy theatres. Enter from the park side.

Painted piglet-pink, but otherwise very dignified, the nearby **Schloss Jägerhof** (Jägerhof Palace) is a rococo confection dreamed up by leading 18th-century architect Johann Joseph Couven. Inside is the eclectic **Goethe Museum** (☎ 899 6262; Jacobistrasse 2; adult/concession €3/1.50; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Fri & Sun, 1-5pm Sat), whose exhibits capture the spirit of this complex genius and his time. Putting the 'trip' in triptych is Paul Struck's epic oil painting (1974) depicting the Walpurgisnacht scene from *Faust II*.

SCHLOSS BENRATH

Elector Carl Theodor was a man of deep pockets and good taste, as reflected in his exquisite **pleasure palace and gardens** (☎ 899 3832; Benrather Schlossallee 104; adult/concession per museum €4/2, for all 3 €6.50/3.75, child under 18yr free; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun mid-Apr–Oct, 11am-5pm Nov–mid-Apr). About 10km south of the city centre, this is where the ruler came to relax and frolic in the wonderfully harmonious complex designed by Frenchman Nicolas de Pigage.

At the centre of the three-winged palace is the **Corps de Logis**, a fancy name for the former

residential tract, where tours (in German) offer a glimpse of the elector's lifestyle. The west wing contains a missable natural history museum, while the east wing houses the moderately interesting **Museum für Europäische Gartenkunst** (Museum of European Garden History).

Take tram 701 from Jan-Wellem-Platz (near Altstadt and Kö).

Sleeping

Düsseldorf hotels cater primarily to the business brigade, which explains why prices spike during big trade shows held not only here but as far away as Cologne and Essen. On the bright side, bargains abound at weekends and in summer. Prices quoted here are applicable outside trade-show times. The tourist offices (p541) can help with **reservations** (☎ 01805-172 020; www.duesseldorf-tourismus.de) for partner hotels only.

BUDGET

Backpackers Düsseldorf (☎ 302 0848; www.backpackers-duesseldorf.de; Fürstenwall 180; dm incl linen & breakfast €20; (P) ☎) Düsseldorf's first indie hostel sleeps 44 in appealing and clean four-to six-bed dorms outfitted with individual backpack-sized lockers. It's a low-key place with a homy kitchen and a relaxed lounge where cultural and language barriers melt quickly. Free wi-fi. The reception is generally staffed from 8am to 9pm.

DJH hostel (☎ 557 310; www.djh.de; Düsseldorfer Strasse 1; dm/s/d €21/26/48 Jan-Jul, €22/27/52 Aug-Dec; (P) ☎) Across the Rhine from the Altstadt, this megahostel is being overhauled while remaining partially open for business. When completed in late 2007 it will put heads on 386 beds in 69 rooms, each with its own shower and toilet.

Hotel Berial (☎ 490 0490; www.hotel-berial.de; Gartenstrasse 30; s/d from €40/60; ☎) A recent top-to-bottom renovation has spruced up this hotel right by the Hofgarten, even though it didn't completely banish 1970s stodginess from its 40 rooms. Still, all the main amenities, including free wi-fi, are there.

Hotel Alt-Düsseldorf (☎ 133 604; www.alt-duessel-dorf.de; Hunsrückenstrasse 11; s €50-115, d €70-160) If you're happy to trade generic-ness for centrality, this family-run hotel should do in a snap. It's a small, good-value place where days start with a big breakfast buffet served in sun-yellow surroundings.

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Sir & Lady Astor (☎ 173 370; www.sir-astor.de; Kurfürstenstrasse 18 & 23; s/d €83/103; (P) ☎) Never mind the ho-hum setting on a residential street near the Hauptbahnhof: this unique twin boutique hotel brims with class, originality and charm. The reception is at the Sir Astor, whose 21 rooms are decked out in one of four colour schemes – grey, mandarin, vanilla and red – and furnished in 'Scotland-meets-Africa' style. Every detail speaks of refinement, from the hand-picked furniture to the textured wallpaper and tactile bedspreads. The 16 rooms at the Lady Astor across the street are even more adventurously decorated and have names evoking dreams of faraway places (eg Madame Butterfly, Marco Polo, Auguste Renoir). Only the gamut of communication devices, including free wi-fi, will keep you grounded in the here and now. This place has a huge fan base, so book early.

Max Hotel Garni (☎ 0211-386 800; www.max-hotelgarni.de; Adersstrasse 65; s/d/tr €63/75/87; ☎) Upbeat, contempo and run with personal flair, this 11-room hotel offers exceptional value and is one of our Düsseldorf favourites. Rates include coffee, tea, soft drinks and a regional public transport pass. The reception isn't always staffed, so call ahead to arrange an arrival time.

Ibis Hotel (☎ 167 200; www.ibishotel.com; Konrad-Adenauer-Platz 14; r €57-72; (P) ☎) Offers the usual amenities and is perfectly located for catching an early train.

MIDRANGE

Easy Living Schaper Apartment (☎ 8622 1100; www.schaper-apartment.com; Hohe Strasse 37-41; apt €95-230; ☎) If you're in town for three or more nights, you might opt for one of these bright, furnished apartments with pantry kitchens in surroundings of galleries and antique shops. The Roof Garden Suite (€275) is the ultimate retreat.

Hotel Orangerie (☎ 866 800; www.hotel-orangerie-mcs.de; Bäckergasse 1; s €100-165, d €125-210; ☎) Enscenced in a neoclassical mansion in a quiet corner of the Altstadt, this place puts you within staggering distance of the pubs yet offers a quiet and stylish oasis to retire to in the wee hours. Rooms are as bright, modern and uncluttered as the lobby and breakfast room.

Hotel Ashley's Garden (☎ 516 1710; www.ashleys-garden.de; Karl-Kleppe-Strasse 20; d €130-170; (P) ☎) You'll feel like an English country squire at this adorable property run by a couple fancying all things British. Public areas and rooms brim with shiny antiques, thick rugs and enough Laura Ashley fabrics to drape the nearby fairgrounds. It's about 4km north of the city centre; from the Hauptbahnhof take the U78 to Reeser Platz.

Radisson SAS Media Harbour Hotel (☎ 311 1910; www.mediaharbour.duesseldorf.radissonsas.com; Hammerstrasse 23; s €110-485, d €130-505; (P) ☎) This hipster haven in the Medienhafen has 135 rooms flaunting the cutting-edge cool of Italian designer Matteo Thun. Even the 'standard' rooms are anything but, given the flat-screen TVs, walk-in showers, full-length windows and other *Zeitgeist*-capturing features. Bonus: free wi-fi throughout.

Burns Art Hotel (☎ 779 2910; www.hotel-burns.de; Bahnstrasse 76; s €125-270, d €145-290, ste €170-350; (P) ☎) Near the Hauptbahnhof, this cheery hotel is great for stretching out in 35 spacious rooms in the main house as well as 26 suites with pantry kitchens in a separate building. All feature modern furniture, natural stone floors and mostly tasteful original art; courtyard-facing rooms also have balconies.

Eating

Curry (☎ 303 2857; Hammerstrasse 2; meals under €6) In this vibrant little kitchen, sausage is king. Get them big, spicy, hot and paired with your choice of gourmet sauce and possibly a mountain of fresh French fries. At lunchtime trendy types from the nearby Medienhafen offices invade.

Im Füchsen (☎ 137 470; Rätiger Strasse 28; snacks €3, mains €6-12; ☎ 9am-1am) Boisterous, packed and drenched with local colour – the Füchsen (which translates as 'Little Fox') is all you expect a Rhenish beer hall to be. The kitchen makes a mean Schweinshaxe (roast pork leg).

Bim's Marktwirtschaft (☎ 327 185; Benrather Strasse 7; mains €8-15) With its horseshoe-shaped bar, big mirrors and red banquettes, this Altstadt classic may flaunt a retro look but won't go out of fashion any time soon. Come for breakfast, solid German fare or just drinks.

ALTSTADT SNACK FAVES

The Altstadt is chock-full of *Imbisse* (snack bars), mostly of the pizza-by-the-slice and doner-kebab variety, which are fine but nothing to write home about. We've ferreted out a few of the places where in-the-know locals feed their cravings. Those with a sweet tooth can't escape the magnetism of **Pia Eis** (Kasernenstrasse 1), the best ice-cream parlour around, bar none, with an incredible selection, quick service and modest prices. Another great sugar fix is the **Waffelladen** (Bolkerstrasse 8), an unimaginably tiny waffle kitchen in business for more than 40 years. Try one with a little powdered sugar or drenched in cherries or other toppings.

Bäckerei Hinkel (several branches, incl Hohe Strasse 31) is another institution that has people queuing patiently for its excellent breads and cakes. A great way to prepare the stomach for an extended pub crawl is by filling up on superb falafel sandwiches at **Libanon Express** (Berger Strasse 21). Trendy types, meanwhile, are drawn to **[Q]üche** (Kurze Strasse 3) for its fresh and healthful soups, salads and sandwiches.

Op de Eck (☎ 328 838; Grabbeplatz 5; mains €8-20; ☎ 5pm-1am Mon, 11am-1am Tue-Sun) Sheltered by the K20 art museum, this uncluttered bistro draws office folk, tourists and art lovers with its intriguing crossover menu. Breakfast is served until 3pm and in summer the terrace tables are the most coveted.

Zum Schiffchen (☎ 132 421; Hafenstrasse 5; mains €9-19) History pours from every nook and cranny in this almost ridiculously cosy Altstadt restaurant specialising in gut-busting German and Rhenish meals. Were portions as huge when Napoleon dropped by a couple of centuries ago? Reservations recommended.

Robert's Bistro (☎ 304 821; Wupperstrasse 2; mains €10-18; ☎ Tue-Sat) Tables are squished together as tightly as lovers at this *très* French restaurant. Bring an appetite for hearty Gallic fare, a tolerance for smoke, and patience – there are no reservations and a queue is guaranteed.

Other recommendations:

Ohme Jupp (☎ 326 406; Rätinger Strasse 19; dishes €4-8; ☎ 8am-1am) Casual, slightly artsy café serving breakfast and mouth-watering blackboard specials.

En de Canon (☎ 329 798; Zollstrasse 7; mains €10-19; ☎ noon-3pm & 5.30pm-1am Mon-Sat) Similar to Zum Schiffchen with a jovial beer garden in summer.

For tapas, paella and other Iberian fare, head to Schneider-Wibbel-Gasse, just off Bolkerstrasse, which is almost completely given over to Spanish restaurants; prices go from rock-bottom to stratospheric.

Drinking

At night, especially in good weather, the atmosphere in the Altstadt is electric and often raucous. The beverage of choice is *Altbier*, a dark and semisweet beer typical of Düsseldorf.

Zum Uerige (☎ 866 990; Berger Strasse 1; ☎ 10am-midnight) This cavernous warren is the best place to soak it all up. The beer flows so quickly from giant copper vats that the waiters – called '*Köbes*' – simply carry huge trays of brew and plonk down a glass whenever they spy an empty.

Salon des Amateurs (☎ 899 6243; Grabbeplatz 4; ☎ noon-1am Tue-Sun) Tucked under the Kunsthalle, this tunnel-shaped café-lounge pulls off an artsy vibe without a single canvas. Museum-goers arrive in the afternoon for tea and chat, while after dark a young, hip crowd keeps the bar and little dance floor hopping.

Melody Bar (☎ 329 057; Kurze Strasse 12; ☎ Tue-Sun) On most nights you'll have to shoehorn your way into this jewel of a cocktail bar, an island of sophistication in the rowdy Altstadt. The drinks are excellent, the owner couple gracious and the crowd mixed.

Q-Stall (☎ 836 9058; Kurze Strasse 3; ☎ Fri & Sat) If Melody Bar is too packed, head across the street to Q-Stall with its circle bar and danceable music in the back.

Entertainment

Check the listings magazines *Prinz* and *Überblick* or the free *Coolibri* for current goings-on in 'D-Town'. Gays and lesbians should look for *Rik Magazin*. All are in German only.

CLUBS & LIVE MUSIC

Harpune (☎ 688 1490; Speditionstrasse 15a) At this highly rated club the dance floor hums with a mixed bag of globally influenced techno, House and electronica. Fridays are dedicated to other music styles, from hip-hop to reggae. The door policy is pretty relaxed, but don't show up drunk or dishevelled.

Pretty Vacant (Mertensgasse 8; ☎ from 8pm) It may be named for a Sex Pistols song, but this Altstadt haunt ain't no punk club. It's a shape-shifter really, whose cellar walls vibrate to different sounds nightly – glam rock to Britpop, electronica to R&B. Live bands, too.

Zakk (☎ 973 0010; Fichtenstrasse 40; ☎ Mon-Sat) Parties, concerts, readings, theatre, discussions – the menu sure varies at this well-established cultural centre in a former factory. A couple of kilometres east of the Hauptbahnhof, the beer garden is a convivial place to spend a balmy summer night.

Tor 3 (☎ 733 6497; www.tor3.com; Ronsdorfer Strasse 143; ☎ Fri & Sat) Massive Attack has played here, as has Radiohead and even Robbie Williams, but now this mega-sized old factory venue draws mostly unshowy party people ready to soak up house, techno, punk, rock or other sounds. It's in the suburb of Flingern, east of the Hauptbahnhof (take the U75).

Other recommendations:

3001 (☎ 6882 4960; Franziusstrasse 7; ☎ Thu-Sat) Hi-tech electronica club in the Medienhafen with giant dance floor, sizzling light and video projections and celebrity DJs.

Stahlwerk (☎ 730 350; Ronsdorfer Strasse 134; ☎ Fri & Sat) Huge dance hall with industrial flair, different sounds and theme parties; near Tor 3.

THEATRE & CLASSICAL MUSIC

Dticket (☎ 01805-644 332; www.dticket.de) is the central booking hotline.

Schauspielhaus (☎ 369 911; www.duesselderfer-schauspielhaus.de; Gustaf-Grundgens-Platz 1) The main venue for drama and comedies, the Schauspielhaus enjoys a solid reputation nationwide.

Marionetten-Theater (☎ 328 432; www.marionetten-theater.duesseldorf.de; Bilker Strasse 7) For something entirely different, catch a show at this theatre, which presents charming and beautifully orchestrated operas and fairy tales, many geared to an adult audience.

Roncalli's Apollo Variété (☎ 828 9090; Haroldstrasse 1) Another popular diversion where you'll be entertained by acrobats, comedians and other variety acts under the faux night sky of a nostalgic theatre hall.

Opera and musicals make it to the stage of the **Deutsche Oper am Rhein** (☎ 890 8211; www.rheinoper.de; Heinrich-Heine-Allee 16a), while the imposing domed **Tonhalle** (☎ 899 6123; www.tonhalle-duesseldorf.de; Ehrenhof 1) is the home base of the Düsseldorf Symphoniker.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Many domestic and international carriers serve the recently revamped **Düsseldorf International Airport** (☎ 4210; www.duesseldorf-international.de) whose infrastructure includes a 24-hour left-luggage office, a Reisebank and car-rental desks.

BUS

Eurolines runs daily buses to Paris (one-way/return from €50/92, seven hours) and Warsaw (€58/95, 20 hours) and once-weekly buses to Prague (€58/103, 13 hours).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Autobahns from all directions lead to Düsseldorf, including the A3 from Cologne and the A46 from Wuppertal and the eastern Ruhrgebiet.

TRAIN

Düsseldorf is part of a dense S-Bahn network in the Rhine-Ruhr region (see p572) and regular services run to Cologne and Aachen as well. There are frequent ICE trains to Frankfurt (€65, 1¼ hours), Berlin (€89, four hours) and Munich (€115, five hours).

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

S-Bahns 1 and 7 shuttle between the airport and the Hauptbahnhof every few minutes. Long-distance trains also stop at the airport, significantly cutting travel time to the Rhine-Ruhr region and beyond. The free SkyTrain takes you from the station to the terminals. A taxi into town costs about €16.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

An extensive network of U-Bahn trains, trams and buses operates throughout Düsseldorf. Most trips within the city cost €2, longer trips to the suburbs are €3.80. Day passes are €4.70/8.90. Tickets are available from bus drivers and orange vending machines at U-Bahn stops, and must be validated upon boarding.

TAXI

For a taxi, call ☎ 333 33 or ☎ 212 121.

AROUND DÜSSELDORF

If you're the kind of person that enjoys tracking down great art and architecture in unusual places, the **Langen Foundation** (☎ 02182-57010;

www.langenfoundation.de; Raketestation Hombroich; adult/concession €7.50/5; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) should fit the bill. The location: a former NATO missile base where Pershings armed with nuclear warheads held the line against the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The architecture: a minimalist glass, steel and concrete box by current Japanese master Tadao Ando. The art: a private, top collection of Japanese art and modern European and American art. It's in the rural flatlands near the town of Neuss, about 20km west of Düsseldorf. Catch a train to Neuss Hauptbahnhof, then bus 860 or 877. By car, exit the A57 at Neuss-West and follow the signs to Raketestation Hombroich.

LOWER RHINE

North of Düsseldorf, the Rhine widens and embarks on its final headlong rush towards the North Sea traversing the flat and sparsely populated Lower Rhine (Niederrhein). It's a flat, windswept and sparsely populated plain that feels like Holland without the windmills and yields a number of off-beat surprises.

The region has its own airport, the tiny **Niederrhein airport** (☎ 02837-666 000) in Weeze, which is used by RyanAir.

Xanten

☎ 02801 / pop 24,500

Xanten, some 60km north of Düsseldorf, is the largest town of the Lower Rhine region. It is one of Germany's oldest settlements, founded by the Romans around AD 100 as Colonia Ulpia Traiana in support of their mission to subjugate the Germanic tribes. At its peak, some 15,000 people milled about the town, enjoying a surprisingly high standard of living. Xanten's medieval heyday is best symbolised by the majestic Dom and nicely restored centre. The town is also the mythological birthplace of Siegfried, the hero of the 12th-century Nibelungen epic and immortalized 700 years later in the *Ring* opera cycle by Richard Wagner.

ORIENTATION

The Altstadt is about a 10-minute walk northeast of the Bahnhof (train station) via Hagenbuschstrasse or Bahnhofstrasse. The Archäologischer Park (Archaeological Park) is a further 15 minutes north of here.

INFORMATION

The **tourist office** (☎ 983 00; www.xanten.de; Kurfürstenstrasse 9; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat &

Sun Apr-Oct; 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat & Sun Nov-Mar) is right in the Altstadt, close to the Markt (market square) and Dom.

SIGHTS

Altstadt

The crown jewel of Xanten's Altstadt is the **Dom St Viktor** (Propstei-Kapitel 8; ☎ 10am-6pm Mar-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb), which has Romanesque roots but is now largely Gothic. It is framed by a walled close, called an 'Immunity', which can only be entered from the market.

The soaring five-nave interior brims with treasures, reflecting the wealth Xanten enjoyed in the Middle Ages. Foremost among them is the **Marienaltar**, halfway down the right aisle, whose base features an intricately carved version of the *Tree of Jesse* by Heinrich Douvermann (1535). The candelabrum in the central nave, with its **Doppelmadonna** (Double Madonna, 1500), is another masterpiece. A stone sarcophagus in the crypt holds the remains of St Viktor, the Roman martyr who became Xanten's patron saint.

Archäologischer Park

Colonia Ulpia Traiana was the only Roman settlement north of the Alps that was never built upon. What's left of it can now be seen at the **Archäologischer Park** (Archaeological Park; ☎ 2999; Wardter Strasse 2; adult/child/family Mar-Nov €6.50/2.50/13, Dec-Feb €5.50/2/11; ☎ 9am-6pm Mar-Nov, 9am-5pm Nov, 10am-4pm Dec-Feb). To help amateurs visualise what a Roman town looked like, the park doesn't merely preserve the ancient foundations and ruins but features faithfully reconstructed buildings and roads. Critics have ridiculed the results, and the place does indeed feel a bit like a Roman theme park – especially in the restaurant where toga-clad staff serve 'Roman' meals. But overall, it's been nicely done and is well worth a visit.

A self-guided tour begins at the **Herberge**, an inn that, along with the restaurant, snack bar and furnished rooms, also contains an info-centre with models and explanatory panels. The **Badehaus** (bathhouse) next door points to the fairly high standard of hygiene enjoyed 2000 years ago. Accessible from a nearby portico are two new **workshops**, where you can observe craftsmen create bone carvings and leather shoes and even buy the finished products. To give you a sense of what the **private homes** of such workers looked like, three of them are being constructed nearby.

Other highlights include the **Amphitheatre**, which seats about 12,000 people during Xanten's summer festival, and the partly rebuilt **Hafentempel**. Be sure to walk around the back for a glimpse of the original foundation. At the **Spielehaus** you can play a round of authentic antique board games. Kids will also enjoy the two imaginative **playgrounds**, including the new water-themed one with little canals, locks and other unusual features (bring a towel).

Grosse Thermen & Regionalmuseum

Just west of the park, and included in the admission, are the **Grosse Thermen** (☎ 9am-6pm Mar-Oct, 9am-5pm Nov, 10am-4pm Dec-Feb), extensive Roman thermal baths sheltered by an extravagant glass-and-steel construction.

The similarly daring structure taking shape next door is the future home of the **Regionalmuseum** where Roman treasures excavated in the area will be presented along suspended ramps spiralling down from the ceiling. The opening is scheduled for 2008.

SLEEPING

DJH hostel (☎ 985 00; www.xanten.jugendherberge.de; Bankscher Weg 4; dm under/over 26yr €17.30/20.30; (P) ☒) This brand-new hostel has a pretty lakeside setting but is 3km from the Altstadt.

Klevertor (☎ 983 00; Klevertor Strasse; apt €42, 2-night minimum) A romantic place to spend the night is inside the most striking of Xanten's surviving medieval town gates, now converted into holidays flats with small kitchens. Book through the tourist office.

Hotel van Bebber (☎ 6623; www.hotelvanbebber.de; Klevertor Strasse 12; s €68-100, d €110-135; (P) ☒) Queen Victoria and Churchill have slept in this old-school hotel where waiters wear tuxedos and the reception is reached via a gallery of mounted animal heads.

EATING

Café de Fries (☎ 2068; Kurfürstenstrasse 8; dishes €3.50-8; ☎ 8.30am-9.30pm Tue-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun) It's a bit stuffy, but this little café has been a Xanten institution for 180 years and is famous for its filled pancakes. Kids love the 'chocolate fountain' and the Easter-bunny centrifuge in the one-room museum (admission free; open 11am to 5pm) at the back.

Gotisches Haus (☎ 706 400; Markt 6; mains €7-15; ☎ 9am-1am) Xanten's prettiest restaurant offers creative German cuisine and artsy design

flourishes within the wood-panelled walls of a nook-and-cranney Gothic merchant house.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Getting to Xanten from the Niederrhein airport (opposite) involves taking a bus to Duisburg Bahnhof, then catching the hourly train (€8.40, 45 minutes). Xanten is on route B57. If travelling on the A57, take the Alpen exit, then route B58 east to B57 north.

Kalkar & Around

☎ 02824 / pop 11,500

About 15km north of Xanten, Kalkar boasts a pretty medieval core centred on a proud **Rathaus** and the **St Nikolaikirche** (Jan-Joest-Strasse 6; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct, 2-5pm daily Nov-Mar), famous for its nine masterful altars chiselled by members of the Kalkar woodcarving school. This was essentially a 15th-century vanity project funded by local burghers who'd grown rich on the wool trade.

Top billing goes to the **High Altar**, which depicts the Passion of Christ in heart-wrenching detail. For a little comic relief, lift the first seat on the left in the back row of the choir chairs (with you facing the altar) to reveal a **monkey on a chamberpot**. Another eye-catcher is the **Seven Sorrows Altar** by Henrik Douvermann at the end of the right aisle. Note the oak-carved *Jesse's root*, which wraps around the entire altar.

Bus 44 makes regular trips from Xanten's Bahnhof to the Markt in Kalkar but service is infrequent at weekends.

SCHLOSS MOYLAND

With its Rapunzel towers, Romeo-and-Juliette balcony and creeping ivy, **Schloss Moyland** (☎ 02824-95100; Am Schloss 4; www.moyland.de; adult/concession/family €5.50/3/12; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Apr-Sep, 11am-5pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar) looks like something from your childhood dreams. It's also a most unexpected sight amid the sweeping pastures and sleepy villages around here. Medieval in origin, it got its fairy-tale looks in the 19th century and since 1997 has housed a private modern-art collection, including one of the largest assortments of Joseph Beuys works in the world. 'Less is more' is definitely not a curatorial concept here, as every wall of the labyrinthine interior is smothered in drawings, paintings and etchings. If you need to clear

your head, take a spin around the lovely park with its old trees and wacky sculptures.

The Schloss is about 4km northwest of Kalkar off the B57 and well sign-posted. Bus 44 heads out here from the Xanten Bahnhof or the Markt in Kalkar, but service is sketchy at weekends.

WUNDERLAND KALKAR

What do you do with a decommissioned nuclear power plant? Turn it into a convention hotel and amusement park, of course. So was the vision of a wily Dutchman who, in 1995, bought the so-called *Schneller Brüter* (Fast Breeder) reactor on a field in Kalkar. Thankfully, the behemoth had never gone live thanks to opposition from environmentalists who convinced the authorities that it was unsafe. Reborn as **Wunderland Kalkar** (☎ 02824-9100; www.wunderland-kalkar.de) it offers utterly bizarre cruise-ship-meets-Vegas ambience. You can free-climb the cooling tower, admire the concrete complex from atop a Ferris wheel or enjoy drinks in a Wild West saloon. A **day pass** (11am-6pm), including park access, meals and drinks, costs €30 for adults and €22.50 for kids aged three to 12 (€25/17.50 November to March). Various hotel and dinner packages are also available. The plant is about 6km northeast of Kalkar and not served by public transport.

COLOGNE

☎ 0221 / pop 969,000

Cologne (Köln) is like a three-dimensional textbook on history and architecture. Drifting about town you'll stumble upon an ancient Roman wall, medieval churches galore, nondescript postwar buildings and avant-garde museums and concert halls. Germany's fourth-largest city, founded by the Romans in 38 BC, has a long list of sightseeing attractions, led by its famous Dom whose filigree twin spires dominate the impressive Altstadt skyline. The Altstadt is also the best place to sample *Kölsch*, the refreshing local brew, in beer halls rivalling those in Bavaria in rollicking intensity. Those with more refined tastes have numerous museums – art to chocolate to sports – to explore or concerts to attend.

Orientation

Cologne Bonn Airport is southeast of the city; see p560 for details on transport to/from the airport. Cologne's Hauptbahnhof is practi-

cally on the Rhine's western bank, right next to the landmark Dom. The pedestrianised Hohe Strasse – the main shopping street – runs south of the Dom, as does the Altstadt, which hugs the river bank between the two bridges, Hohenzollernbrücke and Deutzer Brücke. Student-flavoured Zülpicher Viertel and the more grown-up Belgisches Viertel about 1.5km west of here are also zinging bar and pub quarters.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Gleumes (Map p556; ☎ 211 550; Hohenstaufenring 47-51) Travel and map specialist.

Gonski (Map p552; ☎ 209 090; Neumarkt 18a)

Mayersche Buchhandlung (Map p552; ☎ 203 070; Neumarkt 2) There's another branch at Schildergasse 31-37.

DISCOUNT CARDS

Köln Welcome Card (per 24/48/72hr €9/14/19) Offers free public transport and admission discounts; also available for groups (€18/28/38). It's available at the tourist office and participating venues.

EMERGENCY

Dental emergencies (☎ 01805-986 700)

Gay Attack Hotline (☎ 192 28)

Medical emergencies (☎ 192 92)

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet Café Colony (Map p556; ☎ 272 0630; Zülpicher Strasse 38-40; per 10min €0.40; ☎ 10am-2am Mon-Sat, 11am-2am Sun)

Surf Inn (Map p552; ☎ 925 3301; 3rd fl, Galeria Kaufhof, Hohe Strasse 41-53; per 15min €1; ☎ 9.30am-8pm Mon-Sat)

LAUNDRY

Cleanicum (Map p556; ☎ 869 0638; Brüsseler Strasse 74-76; ☎ 10am-1am) Also a bar (p558).

Eco-Express Waschsalon (per load from €1.50, per 10min of dryer time €0.50; ☎ 6am-11pm Mon-Sat) Has branches at Friedrichstrasse 12 (Map p556), Richard-Wagner-Strasse 2 (Map p556) and Hansaring 68 (Map p552).

MEDICAL SERVICES

Universitätskliniken (☎ 4780; Josef-Stelzmann-Strasse 9) Located 1.6km southeast of Zülpicher Viertel.

MONEY

American Express (Map p552; ☎ 257 5186;

Burgmauer 14; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) Also a travel agency.

Reisebank (Map p552; ☎ 134 403; Hauptbahnhof; ☎ 7am-10pm)

Travelex (Map p552; ☎ 925 2596; Unter Fettehennen 19; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Sat Jul-Sep, 9am-9pm Mon-Sat Oct-Jun, 10am-6pm Sun year-round) Inside the tourist office.

POST

Post office (Map p552; ☎ 925 9290; WDR Arkaden shopping mall, Breite Strasse 6-26; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist office (Map p552; ☎ 2213 0400; www.koelntourismus.de; Unter Fettehennen 19; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Sat Jul-Sep, 9am-9pm Mon-Sat Oct-Jun, 10am-6pm Sun year-round)

Sights

KÖLNER DOM

Cologne's geographical and spiritual heart – and its main tourist draw – is the magnificent **Kölner Dom** (Map p552; ☎ 1794 0200; ☎ 6am-7.30pm). With its soaring twin spires, this is the Mt Everest of cathedrals, packed with an astonishing array of art treasures. Its loftiness and dignified ambience leave only the most jaded of visitors untouched.

Building began in 1248 in the French Gothic style but was suspended in 1560 when funds ran out. The structure lingered half-finished for nearly 300 years and was even demoted to a horse stable and prison by Napoleon's troops. Finally, a generous cash infusion from Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm IV led to its completion in 1880. Luckily, it escaped WWII bombing raids with nary a shrapnel wound and has been a Unesco World Heritage Site since 1996.

The Dom is Germany's largest cathedral. Circle it before heading inside to truly appreciate its dimensions. Note how its lacy spires and flying buttresses create a sensation of lightness and fragility despite its impressive mass and height.

This sensation continues inside where a phalanx of pillars and arches supports the lofty central nave. Soft light filters through the radiant **stained-glass windows**. Other highlights include the **Gero Crucifix** (970), notable for its monumental size and an emotional intensity rarely achieved in those early medieval days; the **choir stalls** from 1310, richly carved from oak; and the **altar painting** by local artist Stephan Lochner from around 1450.

The *pièce de résistance*, though, is the **Shrine of the Three Magi** behind the main altar, a richly bejewelled and gilded sarcophagus said to hold the remains of the kings who followed the star to the stable in Bethlehem where Jesus was born. It was spirited out of Milan in 1164 as spoils of war by Emperor Barbarossa's chancellor and instantly turned Cologne into a major pilgrimage site.

To get more out of your visit, invest €0.70 in a pamphlet with basic information, or join a **guided tour**. These are offered in English (adult/concession €4/2) at 10.30am and 2.30pm (2.30pm only on Sunday) and more frequently in German. Tours include a 20-minute slide show with music presented at the **Domforum** information centre opposite the main portal.

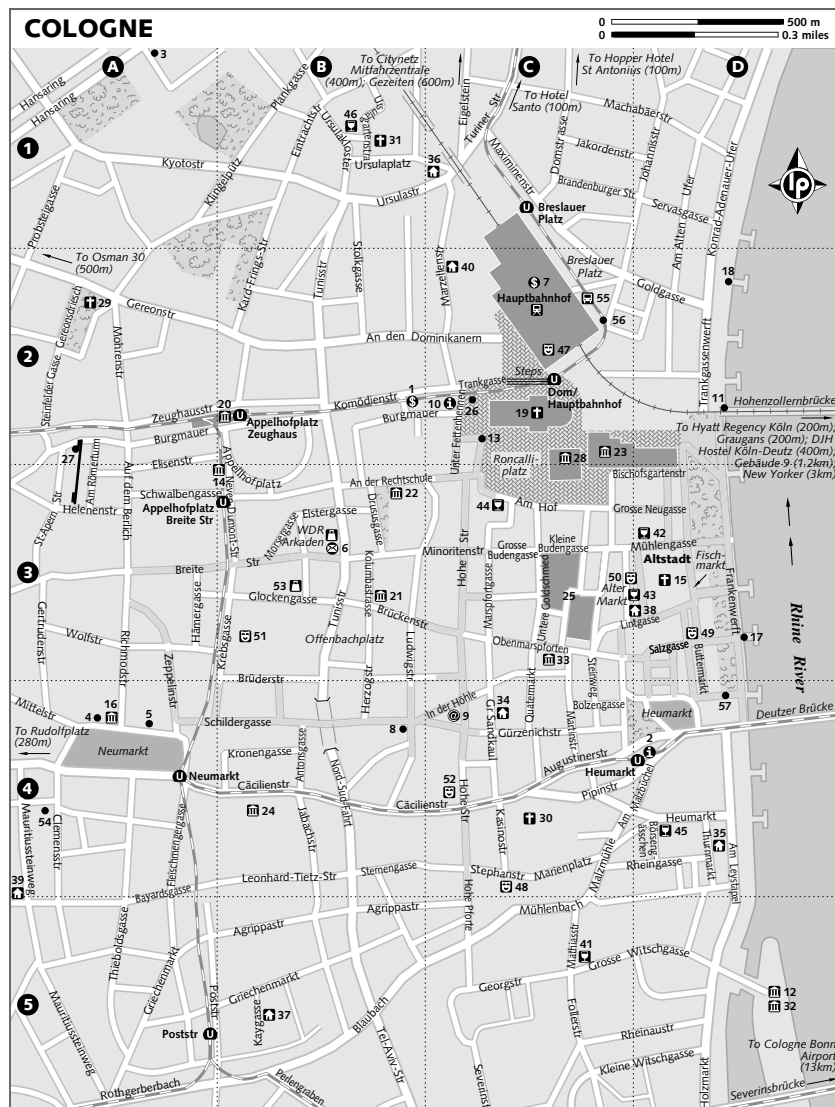
For an exercise fix, climb the 509 steps up the Dom's **south tower** (adult/concession €2/1, combination ticket with treasury €5/2.50; ☎ 9am-6pm May-Sep, 9am-5pm Mar-Apr & Oct, 9am-4pm Nov-Feb) to the base of the steeple that dwarfed all buildings in Europe until Gustave Eiffel built a certain tower in Paris. A good excuse to take a breather on your way up is the 24-tonne **Peter Bell** (1923), the largest working bell in the world. As you might imagine, views from the 95m platform are fabulous...

Cologne is justifiably proud of its **Domschatzkammer** (Cathedral Treasury; ☎ 1794 0300; adult/concession €4/2; ☎ 10am-6pm), whose reliquaries, robes, sculptures and liturgical objects are handsomely presented in 13th-century vaulted rooms. One item to keep an eye out for is the Gothic bishop's staff from 1322.

In 2007, yet another repository of religious art is set to open in an edgy new building by Swiss architect Peter Zumthor which will be cleverly fused to the ruin of the late-Gothic church St Kolumba. Called **Kolumba** (Map p552; ☎ 257 7672), the museum will present treasures from nearly 2000 years. For the latest information, call or check with the tourist office.

ROMANESQUE CHURCHES

Cologne's medieval heyday is reflected in its wealth of Romanesque churches, which were constructed between 1150 and 1250 and survived largely intact until WWII. About a dozen have been rebuilt since and offer many unique architectural and artistic features. Even if you're pushed for time, try seeing at least a couple of the ones mentioned here.



Winning top honours for most handsome exterior is **Gross St Martin** (Map p552; ☎ 1642 5650; An Gross-St-Martin 9; ☞ 10am-noon & 3-5pm Tue-Sat, 2-4pm Sun), whose ensemble of four slender turrets grouped around a central spire towers above Fischmarkt in the Altstadt. Inside, it has a striking clover-leaf choir, an architectural style pioneered by **St Maria im Kapitel**

(Map p552; ☎ 214 615; Marienplatz 19; ☞ 9.30am-6pm), whose stand-out treasures include a carved door from the original 11th-century church and a spectacularly ornate Renaissance roof screen.

The most eccentric-looking church is **St Gereon** (Map p552; ☎ 134 922; Gereonsdriesch 2-4; ☞ 10am-noon & 3-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat, 3-5pm

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Sun), which grew from a late-Roman chapel into a massive complex with a soaring decagonal dome with delicate ribbed vaulting.

If you look at Cologne's coat of arms, you'll see what looks like 11 apostrophes but in fact represents the Christian martyrs St Ursula and 10 virgins. The church of **St Ursula** (Map p552; ☎ 133 400; Ursulaplatz; ☞ usually 10am-noon & 3-5pm Mon-Sat) stands atop the Roman cemetery where the virgins' remains were allegedly found. In the 17th century, the richly ornamented baroque **Goldene Kammer** (Golden Chamber; adult/child €1/0.50) was built to house their relics.

ROMAN COLOGNE

Anyone even remotely interested in Roman history should not skip the extraordinary **Römisch-Germanisches Museum** (Roman Germanic Museum; Map p552; ☎ 2212 4438; Roncalliplatz 4; adult/concession €6/3.50; ☞ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun), adjacent to the Dom. Sculptures and ruins displayed outside and in the lobby are merely the (free)

overture to a full symphony of Roman artefacts found along the Rhine. Highlights include the giant **Publicius tomb** (AD 30-40), the magnificent 3rd-century **Dionysus mosaic** around which the museum was built, and astonishingly well-preserved glass items. Insight into daily Roman life is gained from such items as toys, tweezers, lamps and jewellery, the designs of which have changed surprisingly little since.

Near the museum's southern wall are remains of the **Roman harbour street** and two **Roman wells**. Other vestiges from the ancient settlement include a **Roman arch** (Map p552) from the former town wall outside the Dom; the **Römerturm** (Map p552), a tower standing among buildings at the corner of St-Apern-Strasse and Zeughausstrasse; and the **Praetorium** (Map p552; ☎ 2212 2394; adult/concession €1.50/0.75; ☞ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun), a Roman governor's palace below the Renaissance **Rathaus** (Map p552). Enter from Kleine Budengasse.

MUSEUM LUDWIG

The distinctive building façade and unorthodox roofline signal that the **Museum Ludwig** (Map p552; ☎ 2212 6165; Bischofsgartenstrasse 1; adult/concession/family €7.50/5.50/18; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) is no ordinary museum. Considered a European mecca of postmodern art, it also offers a thorough overview of all genres – traditional to warped – generated in the 20th century. There's plenty of American pop art, including Roy Lichtenstein's *Maybe* and Andy Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* alongside a large Picasso collection covering all of his major creative phases. Fans of German expressionism will get their fill here as much as those with a penchant for such Russian avant-gardists as Kasimir Malewitsch and Ljubow Popowa.

Admission is also good for the **Foto-Museum Agfa Foto-Historama**, an unusual collection of historic photographs and equipment, housed under the same roof.

WALLRAF-RICHARTZ-MUSEUM & FONDATION CORBOUD

A famous collection of art from the 13th to the 19th centuries, the **Wallraf-Richartz-Museum** (Map p552; ☎ 2212 1119; Martinstrasse 39; adult/concession €8/5; 🕒 10am-8pm Tue, 10am-6pm Wed-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun) occupies a postmodern cube that was designed by Cologne's own OM Ungers. Works are presented chronologically, with the oldest on the 1st floor where standouts include brilliant examples from the Cologne School, known for its distinctive use of colour. Upstairs are Dutch and Flemish artists like Rembrandt and Rubens, Italians such as Canaletto and Spaniards including Murillo. The 3rd floor focuses on the 19th century with evocative works by Caspar David Friedrich and Lovis Corinth. Thanks to a permanent loan from Swiss collector Gérard Corboud, there's now also a respectable collection of impressionist paintings, including some by heavyweights Monet and Cézanne.

MUSEUM SCHNÜTGEN

The beautifully restored church of St Cäcilia provides a magical setting for the medieval church treasures of the **Museum Schnütgen** (Map p552; ☎ 2212 3620; Cäcilienstrasse 29; adult/concession €3.20/1.90; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun), including wooden and stone sculptures, manuscripts, textiles and ivory carvings.

SCHOKOLADEN MUSEUM

Anyone with a sweet tooth will likely enjoy the **Schokoladen Museum** (Chocolate Museum; ☎ 931 8880; Rheinauhafen 1a; adult/concession €6/3.50; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 11am-7pm Sat & Sun), a hi-tech temple to the art of chocolate-making. Exhibits on the origin of the 'elixir of the gods', as the Aztecs called it, and the cocoa-growing process are followed by a live-production factory tour and a stop at a chocolate fountain for a sample. Upstairs are departments on the cultural history of chocolate, advertising, and porcelain and other accessories. Stock up on your favourite flavours at the downstairs shop.

DEUTSCHES SPORT & OLYMPIA MUSEUM

In a 19th-century customs building near the Schokoladen Museum, the **Deutsches Sport & Olympia Museum** (German Sport & Olympic Games Museum; Map p552; ☎ 336 090; Rheinauhafen 1; adult/concession/family €5/2.50/12; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 11am-7pm Sat & Sun) is an imaginative, if Germany-focused, tribute to the sporting life from antiquity to today. There are exhibits on the 1936 Berlin and 1972 Munich Olympic Games and on such modern-day heroes as Steffi Graf and Michael Schumacher. Interactive displays allow you to experience a bobsled run or a bike race, and on the miniature football field on the rooftop you can kick with a view of the river and Dom.

EL-DE HAUS

Cologne's Third Reich history is poignantly documented in the **El-De Haus** (Map p552; ☎ 2212 6332; Appellhofplatz 23-25; adult/concession €3.60/1.50; 🕒 10am-4pm Tue-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun), which takes its curious name from its builder Leopold Dahmen. In 1935 it became the local Gestapo prison where scores of people were interrogated, tortured and killed. Inscriptions on the basement cell walls offer a gut-wrenching record of the emotional and physical pain endured by inmates.

OTHER MUSEUMS

Inside a bank branch is the **Käthe-Kollwitz-Museum** (Map p552; ☎ 227 2899; Neumarkt 18-24; adult/concession €3/1.50; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun), with graphics and a few sculptures by the acclaimed socialist artist. A highlight is the haunting cycle called *Ein Weberaufstand* (A Weavers' Revolt, 1897). Enter through the arcade, then take the glass-bubble lift to the 4th floor.

FOOLS, FLOATS & REVELRY

Carnival in Cologne is one of the best parties in Europe and a thumb in the eye of the German work ethic. Every year at the onset of Lent (late February/early March), a year of painstaking preparation culminates in the 'three crazy days' – actually more like six.

It all starts with *Weberfastnacht*, the Thursday before Ash Wednesday, when women rule the day (and do things like chop off the ties of their male colleagues/bosses). The party continues through the weekend, with more than 50 parades of ingenious floats and wildly dressed lunatics dancing in the streets. By the time it all comes to a head with the big parade on *Rosenmontag* (Rose Monday), the entire city has come unglued. Those still capable of swaying and singing will live it up one last time on Shrove Tuesday before the curtain comes down on Ash Wednesday.

'If you were at the parade and saw the parade, you weren't at the parade', say the people of Cologne in their inimitable way. Translated, this means that you should be far too busy singing, drinking, roaring the Carnival greeting '*Alaaf!*' and planting a quick *Bützchen* (kiss) on the cheek of whoever strikes your fancy, to notice anything happening around you. Swaying and drinking while sardined in a pub, or following other costumed fools behind a huge bass drum leading to God-only-knows-where, you'll be swept up in one of the greatest parties the world knows.

The **Kölnisches Stadtmuseum** (Cologne City Museum; Map p552; ☎ 2212 5789; Zeughausstrasse 1-3; adult/concession €4.20/2.60; 🕒 10am-8pm Tue, 10am-5pm Wed-Sun), in the former medieval armoury, explores all facets of Cologne history. There are exhibits on Carnival, *Kölsch* (the local beer), eau de Cologne and other things that make the city unique.

The **Museum für Angewandte Kunst** (Museum of Applied Arts; Map p552; ☎ 2212 6714; An der Rechtschule; adult/concession €3/1.50; 🕒 11am-5pm Tue-Sun) consists of a series of period rooms tracing European design from the Middle Ages to today. Keep an eye out for a 15th-century Venetian wedding goblet, a silver service by Henry van de Velde and life-sized animals made of Meissen porcelain.

Tours

Guided two-hour city **bus tours** (☎ 979 2570; adult/child 6-12yr €14/4) in German and English depart from the tourist office up to three times daily.

Rent-A-Bike (Map p552; ☎ 0171-629 8796; Marks-mann-gasse) runs German/English three-hour bicycle tours (€15) daily at 1.30pm from April to October. Tours start in the Altstadt right below the Deutzer Brücke.

In the warmer months, several boat companies offer one-hour spins taking in the splendid Altstadt panorama (adult/child €7/3.50). Other options include sunset cruises and all-day trips to Königswinter.

Dampfschiffahrt Colonia (Map p552; ☎ 257 4225)

Board below the Hollenzollernbrücke.

KD Köln (Map p552; ☎ 208 8318) Boats leave from Frankenwerf, north of the Deutzer Brücke.

Köln-Tourist Personenschiffahrt (Map p552;

☎ 121 600) Leaves from Konrad-Adenauer-Ufer, north of the Hohenzollernbrücke.

Sleeping

Cologne is not a cheap city, especially during major trade shows (mostly in spring and autumn) when prices can be triple the standard rate.

BUDGET

Station – Hostel for Backpackers (Map p552; ☎ 912 5301; www.hostel-cologne.de; Marzellenstrasse 44-56; dm €16-19, s/d/tr/q with bathroom €35/50/66/78; ☎ ☑) This recently expanded and upgraded hostel is a great budget base close to the Hauptbahnhof. A lounge gives way to clean, colourful rooms sleeping one to six people. The helpful staff speak fluent English, and there's lots of free stuff, including linen, internet access, lockers, city maps and guest kitchen. Breakfast is à la carte, meaning you only pay for what you eat.

DJH hostel Köln-Deutz (☎ 814 711; www.koeln-deutz.jugendherberge.de; Siegesstrasse 5; dm €23.50, s/d €40/60; ☎ ☑ ☑) As far as DJH hostels go, this 506-bed behemoth is state-of-the-art, with each room sporting its own bathroom. It's only a three-minute walk from the Köln-Deutz train station. The Hauptbahnhof is a 10-minute walk across the river.

Pension Jansen (Map p556; ☎ 251 875; www.pension.jansen.de; Richard-Wagner-Strasse 18; s €31-45, d €62-65) Privacy is at a premium in this six-room *pension* located in a big apartment that's also shared by the owners. Still, it's cheap, close

to restaurants and nightlife, and its rooms are colourful, comfortable and decorated with imagination.

Artisthotel Montechristo (Map p552; ☎ 277 4883; www.artisthotelmontechristo.com; Grosse Sandkaul 24-26; s/d from €50/70) 'Camp' rules at Cologne's trippiest hotel whose 12 rooms are brightly pigmented and outfitted with lava lamps and Madonnas. It's close to nightlife, but the buzzy in-house cocktail bar and techno-House cellar club bring the party home. Check-out is a hangover-friendly 5pm. Breakfast is €8.

Hotel Allegro (Map p552; ☎ 240 8260; www.hotel-allegro.com; Thurnmarkt 1-7; s €50-125, d €70-160; (P) (X) (S)) This is a pleasant option just south of the Altstadt with rooms that sport either a rustic Bavarian, modern or cheerful Mediterranean look. Some have river views, but those at the back are quieter.

MIDRANGE

Hotel Chelsea (Map p556; ☎ 207 150; www.hotel-chelsea.de; Jülicher Strasse 1; s €70-130, d €90-150, rooftop r €95-180; (P) (S) (S)) Those fancying an artsy vibe will be well sheltered in this self-proclaimed 'hotel different'. Originals created by inter-

national artists in exchange for lodging grace the public areas and 38 rooms and suites. The eye-catching deconstructivist rooftop extension houses a spectacular penthouse. There's free wi-fi.

Hotel Cristall (Map p552; ☎ 163 000; www.hotelcristall.de; Ursulaplatz 9-11; s €72-184, d €95-235; (P) (X) (S)) This laid-back yet stylish hotel manages to appeal both to the suit brigade and city-break types. Rooms won't fit a ton of luggage but all are appealingly designed and quite comfortable. Light sleepers should get one facing away from the busy street.

Hopper Hotel Et Cetera (Map p556; ☎ 924 400; www.hopper.de; Brüsseler Strasse 26; s €70-175, d €100-230; (P) (X) (S)) A waxen monk welcomes you to this former monastery whose 49 rooms sport eucalyptus floors, cherry furniture and marble baths along with lots of little pampering touches. The sauna and bar, both in the vaulted cellars, are great places for reliving the day's exploits.



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Hotel Santo (☎ 913 9770; www.hotelsanto.de; Dagobertrasse 22-26; s €80-130, d €100-150; (P) (X) (S)) This hotel's location near the Hauptbahnhof may be drab, but this 69-room boutique hotel is an island of sassy sophistication. The design flaunts an edgy, urban feel tempered by playful light effects, soothing colours and natural materials. Gourmet breakfast and free wi-fi in the public areas.

New Yorker (☎ 473 30; www.thenewyorker.de; Deutz-Mülheimer Strasse 204; s €95-125, d €115-145; (P) (X) (S)) This snazzy lifestyle hotel is a charming surprise in an industrial neighbourhood about 3km east of the Hauptbahnhof. Standard rooms are dressed in virginal white, while upper categories boast bold colour accents and parquet floors. Breakfast is €13.

Other recommendations:

Lint Hotel (Map p552; ☎ 920 550; www.lint-hotel.de; Lintgasse 7; s €70-155, d €100-210; (X) (S)) Ecologically correct, contemporary hotel in the heart of the Altstadt.

Hotel Leonet (Map p556; ☎ 272 300; www.leonetkoeln.de; Rubensstrasse 33; s €90-155, d €115-215; (P) (X) (S)) Modern hotel with good-sized rooms and extensive wellness area.

TOP END

Mauritius Hotel & Therme (Map p556; ☎ 924 130; www.mauritius.de, Mauritiusplatz 3-11; s €130-160, d €150-180; (P) (X) (S) (S)) This would be just another three-star hotel were it not for the vast wellness area, perfect for getting off weary feet after a long day on the tourist track. Rooms come in three sizes, but all have a kitchenette, cable TV and sound system.

Hopper Hotel St Antonius (☎ 166 000; www.hopper.de; Dagobertrasse 32; s €100-240, d €150-260; (P) (X) (S)) History and hi tech mix nicely at this posh retreat with plenty of eye candy for the style-conscious. The romantic courtyard garden and small wellness area in the brick-vaulted cellar are great bliss-out spots. Main drawback: the bland location near the Hauptbahnhof.

Hyatt Regency Köln (☎ 828 1234; www.cologne.regency.hyatt.com; Kennedy-Ufer 2a; s €150-280, d €175-305; (P) (X) (S) (S)) This ultra-posh abode is a favourite with celebrities, politicians and anyone in need of feeding their luxury cravings. If you go for it, get a room facing the river and the Altstadt skyline.

Hotel Im Wasserturm (Map p552; ☎ 200 80; www.hotel-im-wasserturm.de; Kaygasse 2; s €180-265, d €210-335; (P) (X) (S) (S)) This is an extremely classy designer hotel cleverly converted from an old water tower, south of Neumarkt.

Eating RESTAURANTS

Cologne's multiculturalism makes it possible to take a culinary journey around the world. Rhenish specialties and typical German food are best sampled in the beer halls (see p558).

Sumo (Map p556; ☎ 222 1590; Aachener Strasse 17-19; nigiri €1.50-3.50, maki €3-6.50; (S) noon-2.30pm & 6-11pm, closed Sun lunch) This small and simple Japanese sushi parlour also serves soups, teriyaki, yakitori and other dishes. The lunch combinations are especially good.

Falafel Salam (Map p556; ☎ 240 2933; Zülpicher Platz 7; falafels €2.60-5; (S) 11.30am-2am or later) This is Cologne's mother of all falafel snack bars. There's almost always a queue for the freshly made and nicely spiced garbanzo (chickpea) balls paired with your choice of sauce. The late hours make it a popular refuelling stop for night owls.

Engelbät (Map p556; ☎ 246 914; Engelbertstrasse 7; dishes €3.50-7) This woodsy restaurant-pub is famous for its habit-forming crepes which come in 30 varieties – sweet, meat or vegetarian. From October to April it presents free concerts at noon on Sunday. Also popular for breakfast.

Alcazar (Map p556; ☎ 515 733; Bismarckstrasse 39; snacks €4-10, mains €9-17) This is the kind of place that never goes out of fashion, thanks to its winning combination of freshly prepared international dishes, unpretentious ambience and chirpy service. No food service in the afternoon.

Fischermann's (Map p556; ☎ 801 7790; Rathenauplatz 21; mains €9.50-18, 3-course dinners €26; (S) dinner) This perennial favourite has minimalist décor, all the better so as not to distract you from the delicious crossover cuisine mixing German, Mediterranean and Asian flavours. Regulars often treat the place as a launch pad for a night on the razzle. Nice terrace in summer.

Graguens (☎ 8281 1771; Kennedy-Ufer 2a; mains €20-35; (S) closed lunch Sat & all day Sun) Fans of 'wok-meets-Western' cuisine – expertly prepared and beautifully presented – will be in culinary heaven at this elegant restaurant inside the Hyatt Regency Köln. Views of the Dom and the Altstadt skyline are gratis.

Osman 30 (☎ 5005 2080; Im Mediapark 8; 3-course menu €39; (S) 6-11.30pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6.30pm Sun) The setting alone of this made-to-impress newcomer on the 30th floor of the KölnTurm would be spectacular, but fortunately the Mediterranean food can more than hold its

own with the views. Cap your meal with libations served in the wine salon with its stylish white leather armchairs. High romance factor. Reservations essential.

CAFÉS

Café Fleur (Map p556; ☎ 244 897; Lindenstrasse 10; dishes €4-10; ☎ 9am-1am) This small and romantic café with its chandeliers and large gilded mirrors is a great place to linger over breakfast, cakes and light dishes or simply while away the time pouring over the free periodicals.

Café Feysinn (Map p556; ☎ 240 9209; Rathenauplatz 7; mains €6-10; ☎ 9am-1am) Eccentric glass-chard chandeliers, a painted-sky ceiling and a mirror-backed bar festooned with twinkling lights give this neighbourhood favourite its own, easy-going charm. Come for great breakfast, homemade dishes or your favourite libation (50 malt whiskeys!).

Drinking

Cologne brims with bars, pubs and clubs ranging from grungy and relaxed to upmarket chic. Centres of action include the Altstadt, with its rollicking pubs and beer halls; the Friesenviertel along Friesenwall and Friesenstrasse; the 'Kwartier Lateng' (Cologne dialect for Latin Quarter, or student quarter), also known as Zülpicher Viertel, along Zülpicher, Roon- and Kyffhäuser Strasse; and the Belgisches Viertel (Belgian Quarter), which has a more grown-up yet still somewhat alternative feel, along Bismarck-, Flandrische- and Maastrichter Strasse.

BEER HALLS

Beer reigns supreme in Cologne with more than 20 breweries producing a variety called *Kölsch*, which is relatively light and slightly bitter. Many run their own beer halls where the brew comes in skinny glasses called *Stangen* that hold a mere 200mL. They also serve a selection of stout Rhenish dishes to keep you grounded.

Früh am Dom (Map p552; ☎ 261 30; Am Hof 12-14; breakfast €4-10, mains €5-14) This beer-hall warren near the Dom is also a good stop for a hearty breakfast.

Schreckenskammer (Map p552; ☎ 132 581; Ursulagartenstrasse 11; mains €7-14; ☎ 11am-1.45pm & 4.30-10.30pm Mon-Fri, 11am-2pm Sat) This locals' favourite has better food than your average beer hall. Empty chairs are a rare sight, especially on Friday potato pancake nights.

Malzmühle (Map p552; ☎ 210 117; Heumarkt 6; mains €8-15; ☎ 10am-midnight) At this convivial beer hall off the beaten tourist track you can enjoy *Kölsch* brewed with organic ingredients in a setting of deer antlers, pewter plates and conversation-happy locals.

Päffgen (Map p556; ☎ 135 461; Friesenstrasse 64-66; mains €8.50-14; ☎ 10am-midnight) Busy, loud and boisterous, Päffgen has been pouring *Kölsch* since 1883 and hasn't lost a step since. In summer you can enjoy the refreshing brew and local specialties underneath starry skies in the beer garden.

Brauhaus Peters (Map p552; ☎ 257 3950; Mühlen-gasse 1; snacks €2.50-8, mains €9-17) This relative newcomer gets a slightly less raucous crowd holding forth in six highly individualistic nooks, including a small chapel and a room lidded by a kaleidoscopic stained-glass ceiling.

PUBS & BARS

Scheinbar (Map p556; ☎ 923 9048; Brüsseler Strasse 10) If you needed any proof that Cologne's nightlife is smoking hot, simply stop by this bar that's dressed in red satin, lava lamps and has sitting areas perfect for chilling.

Six Pack (Map p556; ☎ 254 587; Aachener Strasse 33; ☎ 9am-5am) This is a must-stop on any Belgian Quarter pub crawl. Belly up to the super-long bar and pick from several-dozen varieties of beer, all served by the bottle from a giant fridge. Things can get seriously jammed after midnight.

Hallmackerreuther (Map p556; ☎ 517 970; Brüsseler Platz 9) This trendy Belgian Quarter hangout went 1960s retro-style long before the look became all the rage. Most patrons, though, weren't born until after that particular decade. Come here any time of day, breakfast to late-night cocktails.

Cleanicum (Map p556; ☎ 869 0638; Brüsseler Strasse 74-76; ☎ 10am-1am) You can wash your smalls, surf the internet, check out the original art on the walls, and chill to mellow sounds with reasonably priced drinks (there are nightly specials) at this retro-styled lounge-meets-Laundromat.

Shepherd (Map p556; ☎ 331 0994; Rathenauplatz 5) Cocktail connoisseurs should descend into this elegant cellar bar, which was named Playboy's Bar of the Year in 2006. Named for a colonial hotel in Cairo, it offers 190 different cocktails, including 40 original creations concocted by bar chef Mirko himself.

Also worth a stop:

Rosebud (Map p556; ☎ 240 1455; Heinsbergstrasse 20) American-style cocktail bar for the fat-wallet crowd.

Flanagans (Map p552; ☎ 257 0674; Alter Markt 36) Irish pub. Enough said.

Sky Beach (Map p552; Galeria Kauffhof, Hohe Strasse 41-53; ☎ from 11am, weather permitting) Beach bar on the upper park deck of this department store with great views and chill ambience.

Entertainment

For an overview of Cologne's main nightlife quarters, see Drinking (opposite). Major listings magazines are *Monatsvorschau* (bilingual, mainstream), *Kölner Illustrierte* (mainstream), *Prinz* (trendy) or *Stadtrevue* (alternative), available at newsagents and bookshops.

CLUBS & LIVE MUSIC

Gebäude 9 (☎ 814 637; Deutz-Mülheimer Strasse 127) This ex-factory is one of the most essential indie-rock concert venues in town. DJs take over at other times, and there's also an eclectic programme of edgy plays and films. Take tram 3 or 4 to KölnMesse/Osthallen. Check out the wacky toilets.

Stadtgarten (Map p556; ☎ 9529 9421; Venloer Strasse 40) Surrounded by a small park, this Belgian Quarter favourite hosts vibrant dance parties and live concerts in its cellar hall, but is also a great spot for drinks (summer beer garden) and tapes (€6 to €12).

Lauschgift (Map p556; ☎ 550 0060; Aachener Strasse 50) This three-part fun zone is tailor-made for those nights when you're not sure whether you simply want to chill or hit the dance floor. If you fancy a spin, expect different sounds nightly – electro to funk, soul to trip-hop.

Underground (☎ 542 326; Vogelsanger Strasse 200; ☎ closed Mon) This complex combines a pub and two concert rooms where indie and alternative rock bands hold forth several times a week. Otherwise it's party time with different music nightly (no cover). There's a beer garden in summer. To get here take U3 or U4 to Venloer Strasse/Gürtel.

Alter Wartesaal (Map p552; ☎ 912 8850; Johannistrasse 11) In a former train station waiting hall, this is a stylish bar-disco-restaurant combo. Themed nights range from the erotic KitKat-Club to Depeche Mode parties, '80s nights and the legendary free Monday dance parties with go-go dancers.

Papa Joe's Em Streckstrump (Map p552; ☎ 257 7931; Buttermarkt 37) This hot spot for live jazz has

been packing 'em in nightly since 1976. Since concerts are always free, we don't mind the slightly higher drinks prices. Try the wicked herb liquor available only here.

Other recommendations:

Roonburg (Map p556; ☎ 240 3719; Roonstrasse 33; ☎ Tue & Thu-Sat) High-octane party den with cheap beers and student crowd.

Papa Joe's Klimperkasten (Map p552; ☎ 258 2132; Alter Markt 50) A piano player tickles the ivories nightly in this museum-like place with 1920s-style décor.

THEATRE & CLASSICAL MUSIC

Kölner Philharmonie (Map p552; ☎ 204 080; www.koelner-philharmonie.de; Bischofsgartenstrasse 1) This grand and modern space is the city's premier venue for classical music; it's below the Museum Ludwig. Buy tickets at the tourist office (p541).

Repertory theatre is based at the **Schauspielhaus** (Map p552; ☎ 2212 8400; www.buehnenkoeln.de; Offenbachplatz), in the same complex as the Opernhaus. The box office for both is in the Opernhaus foyer.

Shopping

Cologne is a fantastic place to shop, with lots of eccentric boutiques, designer stores and trendy secondhand shops, plus the usual selection of chain and department stores. You'll find plenty of the latter along Hohe Strasse, one of Germany's oldest pedestrianised shopping strips, and its side street, In der Höhle (Map p552). Schildergasse has smaller fashion and shoe shops and culminates in the Neumarkt (Map p552), where the Neumarkt-Galerie is easily recognised by the upturned ice-cream cone designed by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Brugg. The best streets for maxing out your credit card are Mittelstrasse and Peilstrasse (Map p556), lined with exclusive fashion, jewellery and home-accessory shops. For a more youthful, creative flair hit Ehrenstrasse (Map p556), which also has some secondhand boutiques.

A classic gift for mum is a bottle of eau de Cologne, the not terribly sophisticated but refreshing perfume created – and still being produced – in its namesake city. **4711 Perfumery & Gift Shop** (Map p552; cnr Glockengasse & Schwertnergasse) The most famous brand of eau de Cologne is called 4711, named after the number of this house where it was invented. The shop also has a carillon with characters from Prussian lore parading hourly from 9am to 9pm.

The shops in the Hauptbahnhof stay open until 10pm.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Cologne Bonn Airport (☎ 02203-404 001; www.airport-cgn.de) has direct flights to 130 cities, including New York City on Continental. Discount carriers flying here include Germanwings, Deutsche BA, Hapag-Lloyd Express and easyJet. See p754, for airline contact details. There's a **tourist office** (🕒 9am-8pm) on the arrival level of terminal two.

BUS

The central bus station (Busbahnhof) is northeast of the Hauptbahnhof, on Breslauer Platz. Eurolines has daily buses to Paris (one way/return from €37/66, eight hours) and Warsaw (from €55/76, 21 hours). Trips to Prague (from €47/85, 12 hours) are scheduled three times a week.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Cologne is encircled by the heavily trafficked Kölner Ring, with exits to the A1, A3, A4, A57, A555 and A559 leading in all directions.

If you'd like to hitch a ride, contact **Citynetz Mitfahrzentrale** (☎ 194 44; www.citynetz-mitfahrzentrale.de; Kiosk EGE 1, Krefelder Strasse 21).

TRAIN

Regional trains travel several times hourly to Bonn (€6.10, 25 minutes), Brühl (€3.10, 15 minutes), Düsseldorf (€9, 30 minutes) and

Aachen (€12.50, one hour). Cologne is also a major main-line hub with direct ICE service to Berlin (€93, 4¼ hours), Frankfurt (€55, 1¼ hours) and Munich (€112, 4½ hours).

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

The S13 train connects the airport and the Hauptbahnhof every 20 minutes (€2.20, 15 minutes). Taxis charge about €25.

BICYCLE

Rent-A-Bike (Map p552; ☎ 0171-629 8796; Marksmanngasse) hires out bikes for €2/10/20 per hour/day/three days and also does tours (see p555).

Radstation (Map p552; ☎ 139 7190; Breslauer Platz), at the Hauptbahnhof, has the same rates as Rent-A-Bike.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Driving around Cologne can be an absolute nightmare. Unless you're careful, you could easily end up in a tunnel or on a bridge going across the Rhine. Most streets in the centre of the city are restricted to residents, so often your only option is an expensive parking garage (from €1.25 an hour).

Avis (Map p552; ☎ 2723 4730; Clemensstrasse 29-31) and **Hertz** (Map p556; ☎ 515 084; Bismarckstrasse 19-21) are among the international car-rental agencies that have branches at the airport and in town.

GAY & LESBIAN COLOGNE

Next to Berlin, Cologne is Germany's gayest city with the rainbow flag flying especially proudly in the so-called 'Bermuda Triangle' around Rudolfplatz, which explodes into a nonstop fun zone at weekends. Another major romping ground is the Heumarkt area (especially Pipinstraße), which draws more sedate folks and leather and fetish lovers. The **Gay & Lesbian Street Festival** in June basically serves as a warm-up for the **Christopher Street Party & Parade** (usually in July), which brings more than a million people to Cologne.

A good place to start plugging into the scene is the information and health centre **Checkpoint** (Map p552; ☎ 9257 6868; www.checkpoint-cologne.de; Pipinstraße 7; 🕒 5-9pm Mon-Fri, 1-9pm Sat). The listings magazine **Rik** (www.rik-magazin.de) has good info and a database of hangouts, unfortunately in German only.

Places worth checking out include: **Blue Lounge** (Map p552; ☎ 271 7117; Mathiasstrasse 4-6; 🕒 Wed-Sun), a smooth dance and cocktail bar for a mixed crowd; **Barflo** (Map p556; ☎ 257 3239; Friesenwall 24d), a perennially popular all-day café with great breakfasts and cakes; **Brennerei Weiss** (Map p556; ☎ 257 4638; Hahnenstrasse 22; mains €6.50-14), a no-nonsense restaurant serving delicious German and regional cuisine; **Gezeiten** (☎ 474 7703; Balthasarstrasse 1), which is favoured by lesbians and has a nice terrace and cabaret stage; and the men-only **Chains** (Map p552; ☎ 238 730; Stephanstrasse 4), the city's largest leather-and-fetish bar with House and techno on the turntable and an active darkroom.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Cologne's mix of buses, trams, and U-Bahn and S-Bahn trains is operated by the **Verkehrsverbund Rhein-Sieg** (VRS; ☎ 01803-504 030; www.vrsinfo.de) in cooperation with Bonn's system.

Short trips (up to four stops) cost €1.30, longer ones €2.20. Day passes are €6 for one person and €9 for up to five people travelling together. Buy your tickets from the orange ticket machines at stations and aboard trams; be sure to validate them.

TAXI

Taxis cost €2.20 at flag fall, plus €1.45 per kilometre (€1.55 between 10pm and 6am and at weekends); add another €0.50 if you order by phone (☎ 2882 or ☎ 194 10).

BRÜHL

☎ 02232 / pop 40,000

Brühl, halfway between Cologne and Bonn, wraps an astonishing number of riches into a pint-size package. The town languished in relative obscurity until the 18th century when archbishop-electors Clemens August (1723-61) – friend of Casanova and himself a lover of women, parties and palaces – made it his residence. His two made-to-impress rococo palaces, at opposite ends of the elegant Schlosspark, landed on Unesco's list of World Heritage Sites in 1984.

The larger and flashier of the two, **Schloss Augustsburg** (☎ 440 00; Schlossstrasse 6; tours adult/student/family €4/3/9; 🕒 9am-noon & 1.30-5pm Tue-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun, closed Mon & Dec-Jan) is a little jewel box designed by François Cuvilliés. On guided tours you'll learn fascinating tidbits about hygiene, dating and other aspects of daily life at court. The architectural highlight is a ceremonial staircase by Balthasar Neumann, a dizzying symphony in stucco, sculpture and faux marble.

Cuvilliés also dreamed up **Jagdschloss Falkenlust** (☎ 440 00; Schlossstrasse 6; adult/concession €3/2; 🕒 9am-noon & 1.30-5pm Tue-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun, closed Mon & Dec-Jan), a hunting lodge where Clemens August liked to indulge his fancy for falconry. Though small, it's almost as opulent as the main palace. A particular gem is the adjacent chapel, which is awash in shells, minerals and crystals.

Since autumn of 2005, the palaces have a worthy new neighbour in the **Max Ernst Museum** (☎ 579 3110; www.maxernstmuseum.com; Comesstrasse 42; adult/concession/family €5/3/10; 🕒 11am-6pm Tue-Sun),

where nine rooms trace all creative phases of the Brühl-born Dadaist and surrealist (1891-1976). We especially enjoyed examples of his artistic innovations such as frottage (floor-board rubbings) and the spooky collage novels, which are graphic works exploring the darkest crevices of the subconscious.

Brühl's other big drawcard is **Phantasialand** (☎ 362 00; Berggeiststrasse 31-41; www.phantasialand.de; adult/child €28/24.50; 🕒 9am-6pm Apr-Oct, last admission 4pm, extended hours possible in summer), one of Europe's earliest Disneyland-style amusement parks (since 1967). The park has seven themed areas – Chinatown, Old Berlin, Wild West, Mexico, Fantasy, Mystery and, new in 2006, Deep in Africa whose Black Mamba roller coaster will take your breath away. The others also have coasters along with gondolas, flight simulators, water rides and other thrills, plus song and dance shows. To be admitted as a child you have to be shorter than 145cm; if you're under 1m or it's your birthday, admission is free.

Brühl is regularly served by regional trains from Cologne (€3.10, 15 minutes) and Bonn (€4, 10 minutes). The Hauptbahnhof is opposite Schloss Augustsburg, with the compact town centre behind the palace. Shuttle buses to Phantasialand leave from outside the station. If you're driving, exit Brühl-Ost/Wesseling off the A553 or Godorf/Brühl off the A555, then follow the signs.

BONN

☎ 0228 / pop 309,000

When this friendly, relaxed city on the Rhine became West Germany's 'temporary' capital in 1949 it surprised many, including its own residents. When in 1991 a reunited German government decided to move back to Berlin, it shocked many, especially its own residents. More than 15 years later, no-one need feel sorry for Bonn. Change brings opportunity, and rather than plunge into the dark depths of provincialism, the ex-capital has reinvented itself with creativity and vigour. Its cosmopolitan openness has attracted an international cast of businesses, students, scientists and even such world organisations as the UN.

For visitors, the birthplace of Ludwig van Beethoven has plenty in store, not the least the great composer's birth house, a string of top-rated museums, a lovely riverside setting and the nostalgic flair of the old government quarter. Bonn can be seen on an easy day trip

from Cologne but also makes for an excellent jumping-off point to the Siebengebirge nature reserve and other attractions that can be found in the area.

Orientation

Cologne Bonn Airport is about 15km north of the city centre (see p567 for information on getting to/from the airport). The Altstadt extends north of the Hauptbahnhof with the Nordstadt just beyond, while the Museumsmeile (Museum Mile) and Bundesviertel (former government district) are south along the Rhine; Poppelsdorf is also south of the station but away from the river.

Information

Bonn hospital (Uniklinikum Bonn; ☎ 2870; Sigmund-Freud-Strasse 25) Emergency-room hospital, 4km south of the Hauptbahnhof.

Bonn Regio WelcomeCard (per 24/48/72hr €9/14/19) Unlimited public transport, admission to 20 museums, plus discounts on tours, thermal baths and more. The group (three adults) or family (two adults, two kids) version is €18/28/38.

Bouvier (☎ 729 010; Am Hof 28) Bookshop.

Internet Several call shops near the Hauptbahnhof offer internet access.

Post office (Münsterplatz 17; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat)

Reisebank (☎ 632 958; Hauptbahnhof; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat)

Tourismus & Congress GmbH (www.bonn-region.de) Excellent pretrip planning source.

Tourist office (☎ 775 000; www.bonn.de; Windeckstrasse 1; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat, 10am-2pm Sun)

Sights

ALTSTADT

A good place to start exploring Bonn's historic centre is on Münsterplatz, where the landmark **Münster Basilica** (☎ 7am-8pm) was built on the graves of the two martyred Roman soldiers who became the city's patron saints. It's been mostly Gothic since the 13th century, but the Romanesque style survives beautifully in the ageing cloister. Outside the church, in front of a buttercup-yellow Palais that's now the post office, stands the **Beethoven Monument** (1845), which was largely financed by Franz Liszt.

Beethoven (1770-1827) first saw the light of day in the rather modest **Beethoven Haus** (Beethoven House; ☎ 981 7525; Bonngasse 20; adult/

concession/family €4/3/10; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun Apr-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Mar). It now houses a rather static array of letters, musical scores, instruments and paintings. The highlights – his last grand piano, the huge ear trumpets to combat his growing deafness and a famous portrait – are all on the 2nd floor. Tickets are also good for the **Digitales Beethoven-Haus** next door, where you can experience the composer's genius during a spacey, interactive 3D multimedia show or deepen your knowledge in the digital archive.

In the Altstadt's other main square, the triangular Markt, the baroque **Altes Rathaus** (old town hall) stands pretty in pink with silver and gold trim. Politicians from Charles de Gaulle to John F Kennedy have waved to the crowds from its double-sided staircase.

To the south is the palatial 1705 **Kurfürstliche Residenz** (Electoral Residence; Regina-Pacis-Weg), once the immodest home of the archbishops-electors of Cologne and part of Bonn's university since 1818. Its south side opens up to the expansive **Hofgarten** (Palace Garden), a popular gathering place for students. At its far end, the recently renovated **Akademisches Kunstmuseum** (Academic Art Museum; ☎ 737 738; Am Hofgarten 21; admission €1.50, student free; ☎ 10am-1pm Sun-Fri & 4-6pm Thu, closed Aug) presents plaster casts of antique sculptures in a former anatomy institute designed by Prussian master builder Karl Friedrich Schinkel.

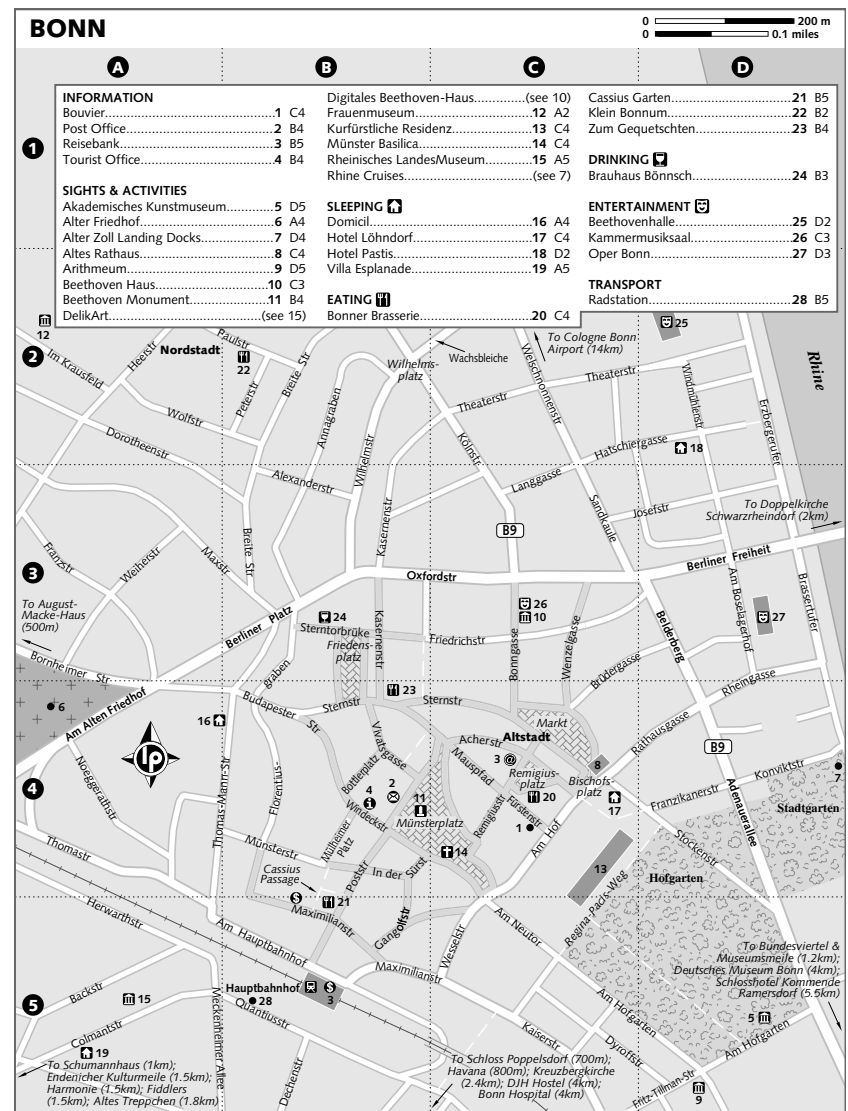
Considerably more intriguing is the nearby **Arithmeum** (☎ 738 790; www.arithmeum.uni-bonn.de; Lennéstrasse 2; adult/concession €3/2; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Sun), which explores the symbiosis of science, technology and art. On view are hundreds of mechanical calculators and historic mathematics books but also an out-there exhibit on the aesthetics of microchips. Design your own or study their beauty through a polarisation microscope. Work your way down from the top floor of this minimalist glass-and-steel cube.

South of the Hauptbahnhof, the completely revamped **Rheinisches LandesMuseum** (Rhineland Regional Museum; ☎ 207 00; www.rlmb.lvr.de; Colmantstrasse 14-18; adult/student/family €5/3.50/10; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue & Thu-Sun, 10am-9pm Wed) now presents its rich collections in such themed exhibits as Epochs, Gods, and Power. Highlights include a 40,000-year-old Neanderthal skull and a rare blue Roman glass vessel from the 1st century AD. The museum restaurant, **DelikArt** (mains €11 to €17), enjoys a fine reputation.

BUNDESVIERTEL

About 1.5km south of the Altstadt along the B9, Bonn's former government quarter was, from 1949 to 1999, the nerve centre of West German political power. These days the Bundesviertel has reinvented itself as the home of the UN and other international and federal institutions (see boxed text, p564). The airy

and modern **Plenary Hall** where the Bundestag (German parliament) used to convene, now hosts international conferences. Nearby, the high-rise nicknamed **Langer Eugen** (Tall Eugen), where members of parliament kept their offices, is now a UN campus. Officially retaining their former purposes are the stately **Villa Hammerschmidt**, still a secondary official



residence of the federal president, and the neoclassical **Palais Schaumburg**, now serving as the chancellor's Bonn office.

An easy way to explore the district is by following the new **Weg der Demokratie** (Path of Democracy), a self-guided walking tour taking in 18 key historic sites. Explanatory panelling in English is provided.

MUSEUMSMEILE

Bonn's **Museum Mile**, one of the country's finest museum clusters, sits opposite the government quarter, on the western side of the B9. Across from the Villa Hammerschmidt, the **Museum Alexander Koenig** (☎ 912 20; Adenauerallee 160; adult/concession €3/1.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue, Thu-Sun, 10am-9pm Wed) is a natural history museum but it's hardly your usual dead-animal zoo. The 'Savannah' exhibit re-creates an entire habitat with theatrical flourish: elephants drinking at a watering hole, a jaguar holed up with its kill and vultures surveying the scene from above. Other highlights include a talking baobab tree in the 'Rainforest', a colossal sea elephant in the 'Arctic' and a condor with a 3m wingspan in the 'World of Birds'.

The **Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland** (Forum of Contemporary German History; ☎ 916 50; Willy-Brandt-Allee 14; admission free; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue-Sun) presents a highly engaging and intelligent romp through recent German his-

tory, starting when the final bullet was fired in WWII. Walk through the fuselage of a Berlin Airlift 'Rosinenbomber', watch classic clips in a 1950s movie theatre, examine Erich Honecker's arrest warrant, stand in front of a piece of the Berlin Wall or see John F Kennedy's famous 'Ich bin ein Berliner' speech.

Further south are two stellar art museums. Beyond its breathtaking foyer, the **Kunstmuseum Bonn** (☎ 776 260; www.kunstmuseum-bonn.de; Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 2; adult/concession/family €5/2.50/10; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue, Thu-Sun, 10am-9pm Wed) presents 20th-century works, especially by August Macke and other Rhenish expressionists, as well as such avant-gardists as Beuys, Baselitz and Kiefer.

Next door, the **Kunst-und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland** (☎ 917 1200; www.bundeskunsthalle.de; Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 4; admission varies; ☎ 10am-9pm Tue & Wed, 10am-7pm Thu-Sun) is another striking space that brings in blockbuster exhibits from around the world. It's easily recognised by the three sky-blue columns jutting from the rooftop garden and the 16 columns representing the states of Germany.

Did you know that the air bag, the computer tomograph and MP3 technology were invented in Germany? You will, after visiting the **Deutsches Museum Bonn** (☎ 302 255;

www.deutsches-museum-bonn.de; Ahrstrasse 45; adult/child/family €4/2.50/10; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), about 2km further south. This subsidiary of the Munich mother-ship (p304) highlights German technology since WWII with plenty of buttons to push and knobs to pull. Look for the Transrapid train outside the entrance.

NORDSTADT

Northwest of the Altstadt, this former working-class quarter with its cobweb of narrow streets is growing pockets of casual hipness. Cafés, restaurants, boutiques and galleries are sprouting especially along Breite Strasse and its side streets. It's prettiest in spring when the cherry trees are in bloom.

The expressionist painter August Macke (1887-1914) lived in this neighbourhood during the three years before his untimely death on the battlefields of WWI in 1914. At his neoclassical home, now the **August-Macke-Haus** (August Macke House; ☎ 655 531; www.august-macke-haus.de; Bornheimer Strasse 96; adult/concession €4/3; ☎ 2.30-6pm Tue-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun), you can see his re-created studio and some originals; the finest works, though, are at the **Kunstmuseum Bonn** (opposite).

Nordstadt is also home of the **Frauenmuseum** (Women's Museum; ☎ 691 344; www.frauenmuseum.de; Im Krausfeld 10; adult/concession €4.50/3; ☎ 2-6pm Tue-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun), which supports and showcases the art of women through exhibits, lectures, readings and performances.

POPPELSDORF & AROUND

South of the Altstadt, elegant and leafy Poppelsdorf is anchored by **Schloss Poppelsdorf**, another electoral palace now used by the university. Students and neighbourhood folk populate the bars and restaurants along Clemens-August-Strasse, which runs south of the palace towards the hillside **Kreuzbergkirche** (Stationsweg 21; ☎ 9am-5pm). This rococo gem is lavishly decorated with gilded faux marble, frescoes and a Balthasar Neumann-designed version of the Holy Steps.

Fans of Robert Schumann (1810-56) might enjoy the small memorial exhibit in the **Schumannhaus** (Schumann House; ☎ 773 656; Sebastianstrasse 182; admission free; ☎ 11am-1.30pm & 3-6pm Mon & Wed-Fri). It's in the former sanatorium he checked into following a suicide attempt in 1854. He and his wife Clara are buried in **Alter Friedhof** (Old Cemetery) on Bornheimer Strasse in the Nordstadt.

DOPPELKIRCHE SCHWARZRHEINDORF

Across the river in the suburb of Schwarzhendorf, the 12th-century **Doppelkirche Schwarzhendorf** (☎ 461 609; Dixstrasse 41; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Tue-Sat, noon-6.30pm Sun; upper church Sat & Sun only) is a magnificent 'double church' where the nobility sat on the upper level and the parishioners on the lower. The beautiful Romanesque architecture is impressive, as is the restored Old Testament fresco cycle in the lower church. Take bus 550 and 640 from the Hauptbahnhof to Schwarzhendorf-Kirche.

Tours

The tourist office runs two English-language tours. The **Big City Tour** (adult/concession €14/7; ☎ 2pm Wed-Sun mid-Apr-Oct, daily Jul & Aug, Sat only Nov-mid-Dec & Jan-mid-Apr) is a combined 2½-hour bus-walking tour. The **Altstadt Walking Tour** (adult/concession €7/4; ☎ 11am Sat mid-Apr-May, 11am & 3pm Sat Jun-Oct) takes 1½ hours.

Boats heading upriver to Königswinter and beyond leave from the Alter Zoll landing docks at the Brassertufer between April and October. **Bonner Personen Schifffahrt** (☎ 0228-636363) and **KD** (☎ 0221-2088318) are the main operators.

Sleeping

For phone bookings, call ☎ 0180-500 3365 or ☎ 775 000; for online bookings go to www.bonn-region.de. Bargains abound in summer and at weekends.

DJH hostel (☎ 289 970; bonn@jugendherberge.de; Haager Weg 42; dm/s/d €22/27/30; ☎ P) About 4km south of the city centre (bus 621).

Hotel Pastis (☎ 969 4270; Hatschiergasse 8; s/d €55/85) This little hotel-restaurant combo is so fantastically French, you'll feel like the Eiffel Tower is just around the corner. After dining on unfussy gourmet cuisine - paired with great wines, *bien sûr* - you'll sleep like a baby in snug, cosy rooms.

Schlosshotel Kommande Ramersdorf (☎ 440 734; www.schlosshotel-kommande-ramersdorf.de; Oberkasseler Strasse 10; s €55-80, d €85-105; ☎ P) Despite the unfortunate autobahn-adjacent setting, you'll feel like a prince when approaching this towered and turreted fairy-tale palace from 1220. It's considerably less grand on the inside, though, so you can leave your tux at home.

Hotel Löhdorf (☎ 634 726; www.hotel-loehndorf-bonn.de; Stockenstrasse 6; s/d €70/80; ☎ P) This 13-room (all nonsmoking) property puts you close to the Hofgarten and the Rhine,

BONN IS BACK

Boomtown Bonn? Who would have thought so in 1991 when the federal government decided to move the capital of Germany back to Berlin? Pundits conjured nightmarish visions of a veritable ghost town and an inevitable return to provincial backwater. Hardly. Combining drive, vision and ingenuity with a €1.43 billion cash infusion from the federal government, Bonn has pulled itself up by the bootstraps in little more than a decade.

Scores of mega-companies have set up headquarters here, most notably the Deutsche Telekom, Europe's biggest telecommunications provider, and the Deutsche Post (German postal service) ensconced in its new skyline-dominating glass-and-steel tower by Helmut Jahn. The Deutsche Welle, the 'voice of Germany' broadcasting company, is just down the road.

Bonn may be small but its horizons are big, an attitude that has also made the city attractive to international organisations, first and foremost the UN. The **Bundeshaus**, the office tower in the Bundesviertel once occupied by parliamentarian pencil pushers, is now a UN campus. Around a dozen departments are here, from the endearingly named Eurobats, which busies itself protecting bats in Europe, to major players such as the head office of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Even the federal government keeps a considerable presence in Bonn. Six ministries maintain their headquarters on the Rhine and not Berlin's Spree River, including Defence, Environment and Research & Technology. The latter has attracted other research institutions, most famously the Center of Advanced European Studies and Research (Caesar). It seems the people of Bonn, ever resilient and savvy, have proved the naysayers wrong.

but is surprisingly quiet despite the central location. The cheery breakfast room with its new flower-festooned winter garden is a good place to greet the day.

Altes Treppchen (☎ 625 004; www.treppchen.de; Endenicher Strasse 308; s/d €70/100; (P)) In the suburb of Endenich, this rustic inn is a true gem that's been in the same family for 500 years. The nine rooms don't spoil you with space but all are fresh, bright and recently renovated. The restaurant, all warm and snug with its woody booths, is great for dinner but, alas, only open weekdays.

Villa Esplanade (☎ 983 800; www.hotel-villa-esplanade.de; Colmantstrasse 47; s/d/tr €70/100/120; (P) (X)) Inside a stately late-19th-century building, this charming hotel has 17 bright rooms with soft, feminine décor: think wicker chairs, pink bedspreads and lacy curtains. Days start with a heaping breakfast buffet served in a lovely room with ornate stucco ceilings.

Domicil (☎ 729 090; www.domicil-bonn.bestwestern.de; Thomas-Mann-Strasse 24/26; s/d €133/160; (P) (X)) This classy hotel sprawls over several buildings grouped around a central courtyard. For something a little special, book the larger deluxe rooms, some of which have romantic stucco ceilings or a courtyard-facing terrace. The Jacuzzi and sauna are good unwinding options after a day of turf-pounding.

Eating & Drinking

You'll find some traditional Rhenish restaurants in the Altstadt and plenty of cafés and international restaurants in the Nordstadt, Poppelsdorf and along Frongasse in Endenich, the so-called Endenicher Kulturmeile (literally 'Endenich Cultural Mile'). Endenich is about 1.5km west of the Altstadt; take bus 634 from Hauptbahnhof to Frongasse.

Harmonie (☎ 614 042; Frongasse 28-30; mains €4-12; (X) 5pm-1am Mon-Sat, 10.30am-1am Sun) This historic dance hall is a beloved pub and cultural venue in the heart of the Endenicher Kulturmeile. A low-key, all-ages crowd feasts on delicious German and Mediterranean dishes inside or in the idyllic beer garden.

Brauhaus Bönnsch (☎ 650 610; Sterntorbrücke 4; mains €4-12; (X) 11am-1am) The unfiltered ale is a must at this congenial brew-pub adorned with photographs of famous politicians: Willy Brandt to, yes, Arnold Schwarzenegger. The menu is full of hearty snacks, but the *Flammekuche* (a pizzalike French dish) is a speciality.

Havana (☎ 721 8884; Clemens-August-Strasse 1; mains €6-12; (X) 10am-1am) This friendly contender in Poppelsdorf always hums with activity. The cooking may not indulge in flights of fancy, but the cocktails are strong and the chicken dishes, pizzas and pastas fill the tummy nicely.

Klein Bonnum (☎ 638 104; Paulstrasse 5; mains €7-14; (X) 6pm-midnight) Klein Bonnum was a Nordstadt institution long before the quarter became up-and-coming. It's sort of a grown-up student pub where you can stick to the basics – salads, pizzas, nachos – or go fancy with such dishes as black linguine with salmon and tiger shrimp.

Bonner Brasserie (☎ 655 559; Remigiusplatz 5; mains €8-15; (X) 9am-1am) This bustling place manages to be all things to all people, from the breakfast crowd to business lunchers, from cake-craving shoppers to late-night cocktail swillers. In summer, tables spill out onto the square.

Zum Gequetschten (☎ 638 104; Sternstrasse 78; mains €8-15; (X) noon-midnight) This traditional restaurant-pub is festooned with eye-catching blue tiles and is one of the oldest inns in town. The menu is back-to-basics German, but it's all delicious and portions are huge.

Other recommendations:

Fiddlers (☎ 614 161; Frongasse 9; dishes €4-16;

(X) 4pm-1am) Near Harmonie, Bonn's best Irish pub is famous for its fish and chips.

Cassius Garten (☎ 652 429; Maximilianstrasse 28, Cassius-Passage; dishes per 100g €1.50; (X) 11am-8pm Mon-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat) Self-service vegetarian buffet.

Entertainment

De Schnüss and *BonnJour* are the main listings magazines, available at newsagents. The central ticket hotline is ☎ 910 4161.

Bonn's entertainment scene is especially strong in the field of classical music. A calendar highlight is the Beethovenfest in late September with several dozen concerts held in venues around town. These include the intimate **Kammermusiksaal** (☎ 981 7515; Bonngasse 24-26) next to the Beethoven Haus; the **Beethovenhalle** (☎ 722 20; Wachsbleiche 17), Bonn's premier concert hall; and the **Oper Bonn** (Bonn Opera; ☎ 778 000; Am Boeselergerhof 1), which also hosts theatre, dance and opera.

Getting There & Away

Bonn shares its **Cologne Bonn Airport** (☎ 02203-404 001; www.airport-cgn.de) with Cologne and offers connections within Germany, Europe and

beyond as well as direct flights from New York on Continental.

Regional trains to Cologne (€6, 30 minutes) leave several times hourly, and there are also frequent trains to the Ruhrgebiet cities and Koblenz (€9.10, 45 minutes).

Bonn is at the crossroads of the A59, A555 and A565. The B9 highway cuts north-south through the city.

Getting Around

Airport-Bus 670 makes the trip from the airport into town every 20 or 30 minutes between 5.30am and 12.30am (€5.45, 35 minutes). A taxi to/from the airport costs from €35 to €40.

Buses, trams and the U-Bahn make up the public transport system, which is operated by the **VRS** (☎ 01803-504 030). It extends as far as Cologne and is divided into zones. All you need to travel within Bonn is a City Ticket for €2.10 per trip or €5.70 for the 24-hour pass. All tickets must be validated when boarding.

For a taxi, ring ☎ 555 555. Bikes may be hired at **Radstation** (☎ 981 4636; Quantiusstrasse 26; per day €7; (X) 6am-10.30pm Mon-Fri, 7am-10.30pm Sat, 8am-10.30pm Sun), on the south side of the Hauptbahnhof via the subterranean passageway.

AROUND BONN

Steeped in legend, the densely forested hills of the **Siebengebirge** (Seven Mountains) rise above the right bank of the Rhine, just a few kilometres south of Bonn. Closer inspection actually reveals about 40 peaks, but only the seven most prominent give the region its name.

At 461m, the Ölberg may be the highest, but the 321m **Drachenfels** is the most heavily visited of these 'mountains'. Since 1883, some 32 million peak-baggers have reached the top aboard the **Drachenfelsbahn** (☎ 02223-920 90; Drachenfelsstrasse 53; uphill/downhill/both directions €6.50/6.50/8; (X) 9am-7pm May-Sep, shorter hours Oct-Apr), a nostalgic cogwheel train chugging along for 1.5km. Prices are a bit steep, but so is the paved path should you prefer to walk.

The walking route leads past restaurants and various attractions, including the 1913 **Nibelungenhalle** (☎ 02223-241 50; adult/child €4/3; (X) 10am-6pm daily mid-Mar-mid-Nov, Sat & Sun mid-Nov-mid-Mar), a templelike shrine to the composer Richard Wagner decorated with scenes from his opera cycle *Ring of the Nibelungen*. Tickets include access to the **Drachenhöhle**, a

cave inhabited by a 13m-long stone dragon, and a small **reptile zoo**.

Further uphill loom the fairy-tale turrets of the neo-Gothic **Schloss Drachenburg** (☎ 02223-901 970; adult/concession €2.50/1; (X) 11am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct), which is being restored and will remain mostly under wraps for the foreseeable future. Eventually, it will house a museum on the *Gründerzeit* period (late 19th century); the current exhibit details the restoration process. Views are pretty nice from here but even better from the medieval **Burg Drachenfels** at the top of the mountain, ruined since feuding troops came through during the Thirty Years' War (1618-48).

The Drachenfels rises above the town of Königswinter, which is served by the U66 from Bonn Hauptbahnhof. A more atmospheric approach is by boat, which leave from the Brassertufer in Bonn between April and October. **Bonner Personen Schifffahrt** (☎ 0228-636 363; one-way/return €6/8) and **KD** (☎ 0221-208 8318; one-way/return €6.70/8.80) are the main operators.

While in Königswinter, you might also want to check out **SeaLife** (☎ 02223-297 297; Rheinallee 8; adult/child/concession €12/9/11; (X) 10am-6pm), a brand-new walk-through aquarium with a legend and fairy-tale theme.

AACHEN

☎ 0241 / pop 248,000

The Romans nursed their war wounds and stiff joints in the steaming waters of Aachen's mineral springs, but it was Charlemagne who put the city firmly on the European map. The emperor too enjoyed a dip now and then, but it was more for strategic reasons why, in 794, he made Aachen the geographical and political capital of his vast Frankish Empire. The thermal waters remain a prime attraction to this day, but Aachen's main lure really is the stunning Dom, which incorporates Charlemagne's original palace chapel. In 1978, it became Germany's first monument to be included on Unesco's list of World Heritage Sites.

Aachen shares borders with the Netherlands and Belgium, giving it a distinctly international and lively vibe that's further enhanced by a large student population.

Orientation

Aachen's centre is contained within two ring roads and is best explored on foot. The inner ring road encloses the Altstadt proper and

is called Grabenring because it's composed of segments all ending in *graben* (meaning 'moat'). The outer ring is known as Alleenring, even though only some of its segments end in *allee* (meaning 'avenue'). The Hauptbahnhof is just south of this outer ring, on Römerstrasse. To get to the Altstadt and the tourist office, head north from the Hauptbahnhof for about 10 to 15 minutes. The main bus station, called Bushof, is in the centre at the corner of Kurhausstrasse and Peterstrasse.

Information

Aachen University hospital (Universitätsklinikum Aachen; ☎ 800; Pauwelstrasse 30) Major hospital, 2km northwest of the city centre.

Mayersche Buchhandlung (☎ 477 199; Buchkremerstrasse 1-7) Books galore. Also at Pontstrasse 131.

Post office (☎ 01802-3333; Kapuzinerkarree, Kapuzinergraben 19) Inside a shopping mall.

Reisebank (☎ 912 6872; Lagerhausstrasse 9; ☎ 9.45am-5.45pm Mon-Fri)

Tourist office (☎ 180 2960/1; www.aachen-tourist.de; Eisenbrunnen, Friedrich-Wilhelm-Platz; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat year-round, 10am-2pm Sun Easter-Dec)

Web (☎ 997 9210; Kleinmarschierstrasse 74-76; per hr €3; ☎ 11am-11pm Mon-Thu, 11am-3am Fri & Sat, noon-10pm Sun) Internet access.

Sights

The tourist office runs **English-language tours** (☎ tours 11am Sat Apr-Oct) that cost €4.

DOM

The oldest and most precious section of the **Dom** (☎ 477 090; www.aachendom.de; Münsterplatz; ☎ 7am-6pm Jan-Mar, 7am-7pm Apr-Dec) is Charlemagne's **Pfalzkapelle** (palace chapel), an exquisite example of Carolingian architecture. Completed in 800, the year of the emperor's coronation, it's an octagonal dome encircled by a 16-sided, two-storey ambulatory supported by antique pillars from Italy. Suspended from the 31m-high dome hangs a colossal brass **chandelier**, donated by Emperor Friedrich Barbarossa during whose reign Charlemagne was canonised in 1165.

Pilgrims have poured into town ever since, drawn as much by the cult surrounding Charlemagne as by the prized relics – said to include Christ's loincloth – he had brought to Aachen. These are still displayed every seven years; the next time in 2007. To accommodate the flood of the faithful, a Gothic

choir was fused to the chapel in 1414 and filled with priceless treasure. Highlights include the **pala d'oro**, a gold-plated altar-front depicting Christ's Passion, and the jewel-encrusted gilded copper **pulpit**, both fashioned in the 11th century. At the far end is the **shrine of Charlemagne**, a golden extravaganza that has held the emperor's remains since 1215. In 1239 it was joined by the equally fanciful **shrine of St Mary**, which shelters the cathedral's four premium relics.

Unless you join a German-language tour (€2.50, 45 minutes), you'll only catch a glimpse of Charlemagne's white marble **imperial throne** in the upstairs gallery. Reached via six steps – just like King Solomon's throne – it served as the coronation throne of 30 German kings between 936 and 1531.

DOMSCHATZKAMMER

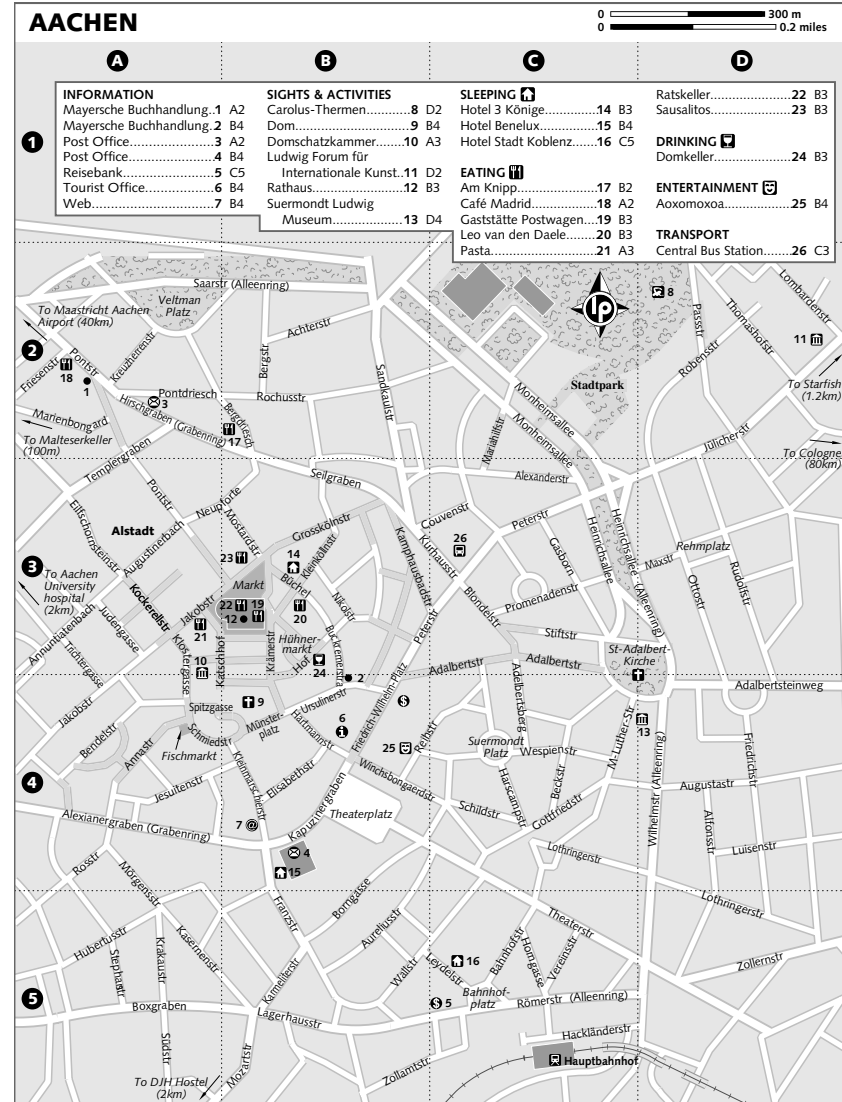
If you were awed by the Dom, don't miss the **cathedral treasury** (☎ 4770 9127; Klostersgasse; adult/concession €4/3; ☎ 10am-1pm Mon, 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Jan-Mar, 10am-1pm Mon, 10am-6pm Tue, Wed, Fri-Sun, 10am-10pm Thu Apr-Dec), a veritable mother lode of gold, silver and jewels. Besides numerous reliquary shrines, focus your attention on the **Lotharkreuz**, a 10th-century processional cross, and the **marble sarcophagus** that held Charlemagne's bones until his canonisation; the relief shows the rape of Persephone.

RATHAUS

Aachen's **Rathaus** (☎ 432 7310; Markt; adult/concession €2/1; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-5pm) is an imposing Gothic edifice festooned with 50 life-size statues of German rulers, including 31 kings crowned in town. It was built in the 14th century atop the foundations of Charlemagne's palace of which only the eastern tower, the **Granusturm**, survives. Inside, check out the **Kaisersaal** with its epic 19th-century **frescoes** by Alfred Rethel depicting scenes from the emperor's life, and the replicas of the **imperial insignia**: a crown, orb and sword (the originals are in Vienna).

MUSEUMS

Of Aachen's two art museums, the **Suermondt Ludwig Museum** (☎ 479 800; www.suermondt-ludwig-museum.de; Wilhelmstrasse 18; adult/concession €3/1.50; ☎ noon-6pm Tue & Thu-Sun, noon-9pm Wed) surveys art from the Middle Ages to modern times. Highlights include portraits by Lucas Cranach and Rubens, and sculptures from the late



Middle Ages. In a former umbrella factory, the **Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst** (Ludwig Forum for International Art; ☎ 180 7104; www.ludwigforum.de; Jülicherstrasse 97-109; adult/concession €5/2.50; ☎ noon-6pm Tue-Sun) is a treasure trove of modern and contemporary art. Exhibits draw from a respectable collection that includes works by Andy Warhol and Jörg Immendorff.

CAROLUS-THERMEN

Oriental pools, honey rubs, deep-tissue massages and soothing saunas are just some of the relaxation zones at the **Carolus-Thermen** (Thermal Baths; ☎ 182 740; www.carolus-thermen.de; Passstrasse 79, Stadtpark; admission with/without sauna from €19/9.50; ☎ 9am-11pm), a snazzy bathing complex on the edge of the city park.

Sleeping

To make your room reservation call ☎ 180 2950, or do it online at aachen.de (www.aachen-tourist.de).

DJH hostel (☎ 711 010; www.jgh-aachen.de; Maria-Theresa-Allee 260; dm/s/d €21.90/35.40/54; **P** **X**) This modernised hostel is about 2km southwest of the Hauptbahnhof in a park overlooking the city. Only a third of the rooms have private facilities, but there are special rooms for families and the mobility-impaired. Take bus 2 (direction Preuswald) to the Ronheide stop.

Hotel Stadt Koblenz (☎ 474 580; www.hotel-ambahnhof.de; Leydelstrasse 2; s/d from €47/67; **X**) If you're fine with basic décor and amenities, this 16-room property near the Hauptbahnhof should be an adequate fit. Budget-conscious families will appreciate that kids under eight stay free in their parents' room.

Hotel 3 Könige (☎ 483 93; www.h3k-aachen.de; Büchel 5; s/d/ste €80/110/125; **X**) With its doesn't-get-more-central location and 10 cheery and mostly good-sized Mediterranean-style rooms (all nonsmoking), this family-run favourite offers some of the best value in town. Free wi-fi sweetens the deal even more.

Hotel Benelux (☎ 400 030; www.hotel-benelux.de; Franzstrasse 21-23; s €88-103, d €103-148; **P** **X**) Though on a busy street, this well-run place has 33 quiet, uncluttered rooms and classy, art-filled floors. The rooftop garden with enclosed gazebo is a bonus. Days start with a generous breakfast served tableside.

Eating

Café Madrid (☎ 160 5201; Pontstrasse 141; dishes €2-9) A perennial favourite along this buzzy nightlife drag, this hipster joint in a former clothing shop does tapas, cocktails and light meals. Breakfast is served until late and cocktails cost just €4 from 5pm to 8pm.

Pasta (☎ 28891; Jakobstrasse 1; mains €5-10; **X** 9.30am-7pm Mon-Sat) A haze of good smells greets you at this teensy fresh-pasta shop where you can enjoy the handmade product paired creatively with any number of sauces and farm-fresh ingredients. Avoid the lunch-hour rush, however.

Am Knipp (☎ 331 68; Bergdriesch 3; mains €6-15; **X** 5pm-midnight Wed-Mon) Hungry eaters have topped by since 1698, making this Aachen's oldest restaurant. You too will have a fine time sending your cholesterol levels through the roof with the first-rate traditional German

dishes served amid a flea market's worth of knick-knacks. Great beer garden, too.

Leo van den Daele (☎ 357 24; Büchel 18; dishes €7-11; **X** 9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6.30pm Sun) Even if you don't feel like trying its divine cakes or no-nonsense German dishes, have a look inside this dark and cosy nook-and-craney café. Leather-covered walls, tiled stoves and antique furniture create a quintessential old-world atmosphere.

Gaststätte Postwagen (☎ 350 01; Krämerstrasse 2; mains €7.50-18; **X** noon-midnight) You can enjoy the same German dishes – schnitzel, sausages, veal etc – in plenty of other restaurants, but rarely will you find one as snug and convivial as this historic double-decker right next to the Rathaus.

Other recommendations:

Sausalitos (☎ 401 9437; Markt 45-47; mains €6-13; **X** noon-1am) Lively cantina with quasi-Mexican fare, serious cocktails and nice courtyard seating.

Ratskeller (☎ 350 01; Markt 40; 3-/4-/5-course menu €32/40/48; **X** noon-3pm & 6-9.30pm Mon-Sat) Michelin-starred silver-service restaurant in the historic town hall.

Drinking & Entertainment

For listings pick up the free *Klenkes* in cafés, pubs and the tourist office. The main bar-hopping drag is student-flavoured Pontstrasse (locals say 'Ponte').

Aoxomoxoa (☎ 226 22; Reihstrasse 15; **X** Mon-Sat) This laid-back dance club hums with different music nightly (from rock to Gothic to metal), charges no cover, and numbers cheap drinks and a friendly, mixed clientele among its assets.

Domkeller (☎ 342 65; Hof 1) Near the cathedral, this casual pub has drawn students since the 1950s with its woody ambience and fair beer prices. In summer, the action spills out onto the sloping, cobble-stoned square.

Malteserkeller (☎ 257 74; www.malteserkeller.de; Malteserstrasse 14; **X** usually Tue-Sat) Elvin Jones and Bill Ramsey used to be regulars at what used to be a venerable jazz venue. Changing tastes and financial realities have translated into an expanded musical menu that includes electro-funk, House, Nu Skool and punk.

Starfish (☎ 938 900; www.starfish-aachen.de; Liebigstrasse 17-19; **X** Fri & Sat) A cornerstone of Aachen's dance-club scene, Starfish keeps things interesting with four different dance floors playing House and charts, rock and pop, soul, and dance floor. It's northeast of the city centre.

Shopping

Aachen is known for its *Printen*, a crunchy spiced cookie similar to gingerbread. Traditionally log-shaped, Aachen bakeries now churn it out in various shapes, from the Easter Bunny to Santa Claus. A good spot to buy them is Leo van den Daele café (opposite).

Getting There & Away

The tiny **Maastricht Aachen Airport** (MAA; ☎ 0031-43-358 9898 in Holland; www.maa.nl), about 40km northwest of the city, is served once daily by easyJet from Berlin. Flights are met by the Airport Shuttle (per trip €10) with service to the centre.

Regional trains to Cologne (€12.50, one hour) run several times hourly, with some proceeding to Dortmund and other Ruhrgebiet cities. Trips to most cities south of Aachen require a change in Cologne.

For drivers, Aachen is easily reached via the A4 (east-west) from Cologne and the A44 (north-south) from Düsseldorf. The B57, B258 and B264 also meet here.

Getting Around

Bus tickets for travel within the area bounded by Alleenring cost a flat €1.45. All of Aachen and the adjoining Dutch communities of Vaals and Kelms can be covered with a Zone 1 ticket for €2 (day pass €5.50). Drivers sell tickets.

For a taxi, call ☎ 344 41.

EIFEL NATIONAL PARK

Established in 2004, the **Eifel National Park** (☎ 02444-95100; www.nationalpark-eifel.de), some 45km southeast of Aachen near the border with Belgium, is North Rhine-Westphalia's first national park. It protects about 100 sq km of majestic beech forest, rivers and lakes along with plenty of plant- and wildlife, including wild cats, beavers, kingfishers, bats and owls. In spring, a sea of wild narcissus floods the valleys.

It's hard to imagine now that, until recently, Belgian troops used much of the area for military exercises. Also here is **Vogelsang** (☎ 02444-915 790; www.vogelsang-ip.de, www.serviceagentur-vogelsang.de; admission free; **X** 10am-dusk), a vast complex built by the Nazis as a party leadership training centre. German-speakers should join a €3 **guided tour** (**X** 2pm) to learn more about the place, its history and architecture.

There are **visitors centres** (**X** 10am-5pm) in Rurberg, Gemünd and Heimbach.

Getting to the park without your own wheels is complicated. At weekends from Easter to October, bus 63 travels to Vogelsang from Aachen's central bus station (Map p569). Otherwise you can reach Heimbach on the park's northern perimeter by train via Düren. Call ☎ 0180-504 030 for specifics.

THE RUHRGEBIET

Densely populated and with a legacy as Europe's largest industrial and mining region, the Ruhrgebiet doesn't show up in glossy brochures promoting German *Gemülichkeit* (a convivial, cosy ambience). But to travellers with an open mind, a sense of adventure and a desire to get off the beaten track, it offers a treasure trove of surprises and unique experiences: a former gas tank reborn as a cutting-edge exhibit space; free-climbing around a blast furnace; a turbine house turned trendy restaurant; dancing in a boiler room; and collieries designed by Art Nouveau and Bauhaus architects are just a few of the quirky things that give the Ruhrgebiet its edge.

Culture is king in the Ruhrgebiet, which is well known for lavish musical productions, top-notch orchestras, playhouses and cultural celebrations. No surprise then, that the entire region has been named the Cultural Capital of Europe 2010.

Discount Cards

The **RuhrTop-Card** (adult/child €33/23) gives free public transport and free or discounted admission to 120 attractions, including theme parks, museums and tours, on any three days. It's available from tourist offices and other outlets. For information call ☎ 01805-181 6180 or check www.ruhrtopcard.de.

Entertainment

For listings, check *Coolibri* or *Prinz*.

Industrial Heritage Trail

Most of the smokestacks and mines are quiet today, but the Ruhrgebiet has embraced its heritage by cleverly converting many of its 'cathedrals of industry' into museums, concert halls, cinemas, restaurants, lookouts, playgrounds and other venues. About 25 of them are linked along the 400km Industrial

Heritage Trail that takes in such cities as Dortmund, Essen, Duisburg and Bochum. Most sites are also served by public transport.

Details are at www.route-industriekultur.de, or stop by the route's **central visitors' centre** (☎ 0180-400 0086; Hall 2; 🕒 10am-7pm Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Mar) at the Zollverein colliery complex (opposite) in Essen.

Getting Around

Each Ruhrgebiet city has an efficient and comprehensive public transport system, usually composed of U-Bahns, buses and trams. Cities are also connected to each other by S-Bahn and regional trains. The same tariffs apply within the entire region, which is divided into three zones. Look at the displays on orange ticket vending machines to see which price applies in your case. Single tickets are €2.10/4/8.70 for one/two/three zones. Single day passes are €4.90/9.30/20.30; group day passes for up to five people travelling together are €10.60/14.50/26.90.

ESSEN

☎ 0201 / pop 585,000

When the decision came down that Essen had beat historic Görlitz in Saxony to become Cultural Capital of Europe in 2010, eyebrows were raised around the land. What kind of 'culture' could there possibly be in this city of steel and coal?

Plenty.

Van Gogh anyone? Go to the Folkwang Museum. Fancy a look at Emperor Otto III's gem-studded childhood crown? Head for the cathedral treasury. A Bauhaus-style colliery on the list of Unesco's World Heritage Sites? Look no further than the Zollverein colliery complex. Need we go on?

It's taken a few decades, but Germany's seventh-largest city has mastered the transition from industrial powerhouse to city of commerce and culture like few others. Add to that a verdant green belt and half-timbered medieval quarters and you may find it hard to believe you're in the Ruhrgebiet. Old images die hard, but even cynics would find lots to like about Essen – if only they'd come and see for themselves.

Orientation

The Hauptbahnhof Nord (North) exit drops you right onto the centre's main artery, the pedestrianised Kettwiger Strasse. Essen's

major sights are rather spread out, but all are accessible by U-Bahn, S-Bahn or trams. The handiest line is tram 107, which connects the centre with Zollverein colliery complex in the north and the museum complex and Rüttenscheid entertainment mile in the south. The Baldeneysee and the Werden suburb are further south and served by S-Bahn.

Information

Mayersche Buchhandlung (☎ 365 670; Markt 5-6) Bookshop.

Medical emergencies (☎ 192 92)

Police headquarters (☎ 8290; Büscherstrasse 2)

Post office (Willy-Brandt-Platz 1; 🕒 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-3.30pm Sat) Outside the Hauptbahnhof.

Reisebank (☎ 202 671; Hauptbahnhof; 🕒 7.15am-7.45pm Mon-Fri, 8.15am-4pm Sat, 9.45am-1.15pm Sun)

Stadtbibliothek (☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) Internet access.

Tourist office (☎ 194 33, 887 2048; www.essen.de; Am Hauptbahnhof 2; 🕒 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat)

Sights

CITY CENTRE

Essen's medieval **Dom** (☎ 220 4206; Burgplatz 2) is an island of quiet engulfed by the commercialism of pedestrianised Kettwiger Strasse, the main shopping strip. It has a magnificent collection of Ottonian works, all about 1000 years old. Most prized is the **Golden Madonna**, set in its own midnight-blue chapel matching the colour of her eyes. More highlights await in the **treasury** (adult/concession €3/2; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue & Thu-Sat, 10am-7pm Wed, 11.30am-5pm Sun), including a crown worn by Holy Roman Emperor Otto III and gemstone-encrusted processional crosses.

East of the cathedral, the **Alte Synagoge** (☎ 884 5218; Steeler Strasse 29; admission free; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) is Germany's largest synagogue and miraculously survived WWII largely intact. Today it's a memorial site with exhibits on Jewish life, persecution and resistance during the Third Reich.

MUSEUM COMPLEX

One of Germany's most prestigious collections of 19th- and 20th-century art awaits at the **Museum Folkwang** (☎ 884 5314; Goethestrasse 41; adult/concession/family €5/3.50/10.50, child under 14yr free; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, 10am-midnight Fri). From brooding landscapes by Caspar David Friedrich to light-hearted impressionist works

by Monet and Renoir and abstract classics by Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock, you'll find hardly a big name missing.

The **Ruhrlandmuseum** (Ruhr Regional Museum; ☎ 884 5200; Goethestrasse 41; adult/concession/family €5/3.50/10.50, child under 14 free; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, 10am-midnight Fri) next door is a traditional regional history museum. In late 2007, however, a completely revamped presentation is expected to open in the former coal wash house in the Zollverein complex as the rebaptised **Ruhrmuseum**.

Catch tram 107 or the U11 to Rüttenscheider Stern, then follow the signs.

ZOLLVEREIN

A key site along the Industrial Heritage Trail, the former **Zollverein colliery complex** (☎ 830 3636; www.zollverein.de; Gelsenkirchener Strasse 181; 🕒 visitors centre 10am-7pm Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Mar) is a marvel of efficiency while in operation from 1932 until 1986. In 2001 Unesco declared the Bauhaus-style colliery a World Heritage Site. In a shining example of how to recycle an industrial waste heap, it is now a cultural centre with performance venues, a restaurant, artist studios and exhibition spaces. Unique experiences include a ride aboard the Ferris wheel-like **Sonnenrad** (Sun Wheel) through the smelters of the coking plant and a dip into a **pool** wrought from shipping containers (both free). In winter, it's possible to **ice skate** (€6) around the coking plant.

Another highlight is the **Red Dot Design Museum** (☎ 301 040; adult/concession €5/3, child under 12 free; 🕒 11am-6pm Tue-Thu, 11am-8pm Fri-Sun) in the former boiler house, creatively adapted by Lord Norman Foster. In a perfect marriage of space and function, this four-storey maze showcases the best in contemporary design right amidst the original fixtures: bathtubs balance on grated walkways, bike helmets dangle from snakelike heating ducts, and beds perch atop a large oven.

In late 2007, the **Ruhrmuseum** (currently called Ruhrlandmuseum, above) is expected to take up residence in the former coal wash house.

A variety of German-language **guided tours** (€4.50-15), some led by former miners, take you around the grounds. Call or check www.zollverein.de for details.

The 107 tram travels here from the Hauptbahnhof.

BALDENYSEE & VILLA HÜGEL

South of the city centre is Essen's sprawling green belt, which follows the flow of the Ruhr River to the large **Baldeneysee**. It's not quite the Med, but on hot summer days there's an undeniable holiday feeling at the **Seaside Beach** (Freiherr-vom-Stein-Strasse 384), a 250m-long stretch of sand where you can swim, windsurf and play beach volleyball.

On the lake's north shore looms the imposing **Villa Hügel** (☎ 188 4823; www.villahuegel.de; Hügel 1; adult/concession €1/free; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), where the Krupp dynasty made its home from 1873 to 1945. You can wander around the partially furnished private quarters of the Grosses Haus (Large House), which also hosts the occasional concert and internationally acclaimed art show (call or check the website for hours and admission). The Kleines Haus (Small House), a former guest-house, is currently under renovation but will eventually house an exhibit on the history of the family and the company. The lavish **park** (🕒 8am-8pm) is a pleasant place for a picnic or relaxing.

The lake and Villa Hügel are served by the S6 from the Hauptbahnhof.

WERDEN

On the southern Ruhr bank, across from Villa Hügel, the half-timbered houses and cobbled lanes of the suburb of Werden give you a sense of what a pre-industrial Ruhrgebiet must have looked like. Students of the prestigious Folkwang School for Music, Dance and Drama fill the many pubs, cafés and restaurants, and the DJH hostel is here as well.

Werden's main sight is the 1175 **Abteikirche St Ludger** (☎ 491 801; Brückstrasse 54; 🕒 10am-noon & 3-5pm Tue-Sun), a beautiful late-Romanesque church named for the Frisian missionary buried here. It has an impressive exterior as well as a commendable **treasury** (admission €2).

The S6 goes straight to Werden from the Hauptbahnhof.

Sleeping

Hotels in the centre cater for the suit brigade and are mostly nondescript and overpriced. The more charming places are in the suburbs.

DJH hostel (☎ 491 163; www.jugendherberge.de/jh/essen; Pastoratsberg 2; dm/s/tw €19.80/24.90/30; 📞 ☒) Essen's expanded and updated hostel is nicely located in Werden. Many rooms have private

THE KRUPP DYNASTY – MEN OF STEEL

Steel and Krupp are virtual synonyms. So are Krupp and Essen. For it's this bustling Ruhrgebiet city that is the ancestral seat of the Krupp family and the headquarters of one of the most powerful corporations in Europe. (To avoid confusion, Krupp has nothing to do with the company that produces coffee-makers and other appliances – that's Krups.)

Through successive driven and obsessive generations, the Krupps amassed a huge private fortune, provided the German weaponry for four major wars and manipulated world economics and politics for their own gain. At the same time, however, they established a relationship between workers and management that's still the basis for today's social contract in industrialised Germany.

It all began rather modestly in 1811 when Friedrich Krupp and two partners founded a company to process 'English cast steel' but, despite minor successes, he left a company mired in debt upon his death in 1826. Enter his son Alfred, then a tender 14, who would go on to become one of the seminal figures of the industrial age.

It was through the production of the world's finest steel that the 'Cannon King' galvanised a company that – by 1887 – employed more than 20,000 workers. In an unbroken pattern of dazzling innovation, coupled with ruthless business practices, Krupp produced the wheels and rails for America's railroads and the stainless steel plating on New York's Chrysler building. Krupp gave the world the first diesel engine and the first steam turbine locomotive. And – ultimately – it produced the fearsome weapons that allowed the Wehrmacht to launch the horror of the Blitzkrieg in WWII.

But in another pioneering move, Krupp also provided womb-to-tomb benefits to its workers at a time when the term 'social welfare' had not yet entered the world's vocabulary. Alfred realised that his company's progress and profit came at a price largely borne on the backs of his workers. He created a variety of measures, including company health insurance, a pension scheme, subsidised housing estates and company-owned retail shops.

Krupp will forever be associated, however, with the disastrous period in German history when a maniac from Austria nearly brought the world to its knees. Not only did the corporation supply the hardware for the German war machine, but it also provided much of the financial backing that Hitler needed to build up his political power base. Krupp plants were prime targets for Allied bombers. When the dust had settled, about two-thirds of its factories had either been destroyed or damaged. An American military court sentenced Alfred Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach (Alfred's great-grandson) to prison, releasing him in 1951. He resumed the management of the firm in 1953.

An excellent source for an understanding of what the Krupp family has meant to Germany is William Manchester's brilliant chronicle *The Arms of Krupp* (1964).

bathrooms. Take the S6 to Essen-Werden, then bus 190 to Ruhrlandklinik.

Hotel Zum Deutschen Haus (☎ 232 989; www.hotel-zum-deutschen-haus.de; Kastanienallee 16; s €42-46, d with/without bathroom €77/46) This central, family-operated hotel offers pleasant if plain rooms and home-cooked meals in the restaurant (mains €6 to €12).

Hotel Résidence (☎ 02054-955 90; www.hotel-residence.de; Auf der Forst 1; s/d €100/125; (P)) Shiny and petite, this 18-room hotel in an Art Nouveau villa in the historic suburb of Kettwig appeals to refined tastes. Its gourmet restaurant ranks among Germany's finest (mains around €35), but the food's almost as good at its second eatery, Püree (opposite).

Hotel Margarethenhöhe (☎ 438 60; www.margarethenhoehe.com; Steile Strasse 46; s €100-135, d €130-165; (P) ☒) A former Krupp guesthouse has morphed into this colourful hotel, filled with youthful flair, art and designer touches. It's about 5km south of the centre in the Margarethenhöhe, a gardenlike workers' colony of small and trim houses. Take the U17 to Laubenweg.

Eating

Skip Essen's city centre and head straight to the Rütterscheid district ('Rü' for short; U11 or tram 107 to Martinstrasse). Here pubs and bars rub shoulders with restaurants of all kinds.

Zodiac (☎ 771 212; Witteringstrasse 41; mains €8-16; ☒ dinner Fri-Wed) People sharing laughs over dinner are a common sight at this jungly vegetarian restaurant where you'll munch on creative foods inspired by the world's cuisines. Some dishes are suitable for vegans, and organic pizza is available too.

raum.eins (☎ 455 3747; Rütterscheider Strasse 154; business lunch €8, mains €10-23; ☒ lunch Mon-Fri & dinner Mon-Sat) The purist look, trendy crowd and crossover food could be warning signs, but not at this perennial favourite whose chef puts substance before culinary pyrotechnics. Nice terrace.

Casino Zollverein (☎ 830 240; Gelsenkirchener Strasse 181; mains €12-20; ☒ closed Mon) Cast iron, concrete and candlelight characterise this eccentric, even romantic, restaurant inside the colliery's former turbine house. The menu advertises 'new world cuisine' but in reality sticks mostly to new spins on regional and German faves. Not bad, though.

Püree (☎ 02054; Auf der Forst 1; mains €13-19; ☒ dinner Tue-Fri) A godsend for budget gourmets, the second – but by no means secondary – restaurant of the Hotel Résidence (opposite) presents tummy tantalisers that you'll remember long after the bill's been paid.

For the creamiest ice cream, stop by **Mörchens Eiscafé** (☎ 422 538; Rütterscheider Strasse 202).

Entertainment

Zeche Carl (☎ 834 4410; Wilhelm-Nieswandt-Allee 100; ☒ nightly) The machine hall and washrooms of this former colliery have been reborn as an alternative cultural centre with live concerts, parties, cabaret, theatre and art exhibits. Take U11 or U17 to Karlsplatz.

Mudia Art (☎ 235 028; Frohnhauser Strasse 75; ☒ Sat) This sexy dance temple in an old factory has been a sizzling Ruhrgebiet hot spot since 1993. It's high-style, high-energy and high-attitude.

GOP Variété (☎ 247 9393; Rottstrasse 30) At this crowd-pleaser, jugglers, acrobats, ventriloquists and other artistes seize the stage in monthly changing programmes.

Colosseum (☎ 887 2333; Altendorfer Strasse 1) Musical theatre is presented at this handsomely converted late-19th-century factory.

Philharmonie Essen (☎ 812 2200; Huysenallee 53) Classical, jazz and other concerts take place in this beautiful space, which combines a historical section with a new glass pavilion.

Grillo-Theater (☎ 812 2200; Theaterplatz) Come here for classic and contemporary drama and comedies.

Aalto-Theater (☎ 812 2200; Operplatz 10) Designed by the late Finnish star architect Alvar Aalto, this is Essen's main venue for opera and ballet.

Getting There & Away

ICE trains leave in all directions hourly for such cities as Frankfurt (€72, 2½ hours) and Berlin (€83, 3¾ hours). Essen is also efficiently linked to other Ruhrgebiet cities, as well as to Düsseldorf and Cologne.

The local autobahns A40, A42 and A52 are often clogged during rush-hour. For ride-shares contact the **Citynetz Mitfahrzentrale** (☎ 194 44; www.citynetz-mitfahrzentrale.de; Freiheit 5) outside the Hauptbahnhof's south exit.

BOCHUM

☎ 0234 / pop 389,000

Industrial cities are not exactly the stuff of heartfelt anthems, but that didn't stop singer-songwriter Herbert Grönemeyer from rhapsodising about his home town in the 1984 song 'Bochum'. The homage not only boosted Grönemeyer's career but also the image of this classic Ruhrgebiet city, halfway between Essen and Dortmund.

Though indeed no beauty, as one of the lyrics says, Bochum still makes for a worthwhile stop thanks to a couple of interesting museums and one of the buzziest nightlife districts in the entire Ruhrgebiet.

The **tourist office** (☎ 963 020; Huelsestrasse 9; ☒ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat) is a short walk north of the Hauptbahnhof main exit.

Sights

DEUTSCHES BERGBAU-MUSEUM

The enormous **Deutsches Bergbau-Museum** (German Mining Museum; ☎ 587 70; Am Bergbaumuseum 28; adult/concession/family €6.50/3/14; ☒ 8.30am-5pm Tue-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun) thoroughly documents life *unter Tage* (below ground). Admission includes a trip beneath the earth's surface to a demonstration pit, which will help you imagine the merciless working conditions coal miners endured. Only weekday visits are guided (in German). Another highlight is a ride up the landmark winding tower, a turquoise metal construction once used for transporting men and equipment down the shaft and bringing the full wagons back up. Views are commanding from the 62m platform. The U-Bahn 35 goes here from the Hauptbahnhof.

EISENBAHMUSEUM

Fans of historic 'iron horses' should make the pilgrimage to the **Eisenbahnmuseum** (☎ 492 516; Dr-C-Otto-Strasse 191; adult/child/family €5/2.50/13; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri & Sun Mar-late Nov). It displays around 180 steam and electric locomotives, coaches and wagons dating back as far as 1853. From the Hauptbahnhof take tram 318 to Bochum-Dahlhausen, then walk for 1200m or take the historic shuttle (Sundays only).

Sleeping & Eating

Aleppo (☎ 588 380; www.hotelaleppo.de; Nordring 30; dm €21-22, s/d €36/46; ☒) After a night of partying in the Bermuda Triangle (see below), you'll get a good night's sleep at this friendly hotel-hostel combination opposite the Bergbaumuseum. Bonuses include free wi-fi and public transport tickets, but bathrooms are shared.

Art Hotel Tucholsky (☎ 964 360; www.art-hotel-tucholsky.de; Viktoriastrasse 73; s €55-80, d €99-109; ☐) Right in the Bermuda Triangle, this designer hotel has smallish but stylish rooms and a nice café (mains €6 to €13) that pulls in a good crowd all day long.

Entertainment

Bochum rightly enjoys a reputation as a Ruhrgebiet entertainment hub. Most people come to get lost in the city's infamous Bermuda Triangle of bars, clubs and restaurants. The three streets in question are the Kortumstrasse, Viktoriastrasse and Brüderstrasse, all within a five-minute walk of the Hauptbahnhof.

Starlight Express (☎ 963 020; www.starlight-express-musical.de) This musical has been playing to capacity crowds since 1988.

Schauspielhaus (theatre; ☎ 333 311; Königsallee 15) Bochum's theatre ranks among the best in Germany.

Getting There & Around

Bochum is efficiently linked by direct train to major cities such as Hamburg (€56, three hours), Berlin (€82, 3½ hours) and Frankfurt (€73, 2½ hours). Getting to other Ruhrgebiet towns is a snap using the S-Bahn or RE trains with multiple departures hourly. The A43 and A40 intersect in Bochum.

Public transportation within the city is composed of a small U-Bahn network, trams and buses.

DORTMUND

☎ 0231 / pop 591,000

Dortmund, the largest city in the Ruhrgebiet, once built its prosperity on coal, steel and beer. These days, the mines are closed, the steel mills quiet and more *Zeitgeist*-compatible hi-tech industries have taken their place. Only the breweries are going as strong as ever, churning out huge quantities of delicious beer and ale, much of it for export. Trading has always been big in Dortmund, which was a major stop on the Hellweg, a medieval trading route, and a big player in the Hanseatic League. Even today, the city centre is tops for shopping. Football (soccer) is another major passion. Borussia Dortmund, the city's *Bundesliga* (Germany's first league) team, has been national champion six times, although not since the 2001-2 season. Its home base, the 67,000-seat Westfalenstadion (now Signal-Iduna Park) was one of a dozen FIFA World Cup venues in 2006.

Orientation

The airport is east of the city (see p579 for transport to/from the airport). Most sights cluster within the city centre bounded by a ring road consisting of segments all ending in 'wall'. The Hauptbahnhof, bus station and tourist office are on Königswall on the north side of this ring. Just south of here, the pedestrianised Westenhellweg (which turns into Ostenhellweg further east) is the centre's main thoroughfare and heart of a bustling shopping district. The Kreuzviertel student quarter, the trade fair grounds and the famous football stadium are all south of the centre and easily reached by public transport.

Information

Dortmund hospital (Klinikum Dortmund; ☎ 9530; Beurhausstrasse 40) Centrally located hospital.

Dortmund Tourist-Card (1/3 days per person €8/14, up to 5 persons €14/24) Unlimited public transport, free or reduced museum admission and other discounts on one day or three consecutive days.

Mayersche Buchhandlung (☎ 809 050; Westenhellweg 37-41) Bookshop.

Post office (☎ 01802-3333; Kurfürstenstrasse 2; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat) About 75m to the west of the Hauptbahnhof north exit.

Reisebank (☎ 138 8946; Königswall 18a; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) Next to the tourist office.

Stadtbücherei (public library; ☎ 502 3209; Königswall 18; per 30min €1; ☎ 10am-6.30pm Tue-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) Internet access.

Tourist office (☎ 1899 9222; www.dortmund-tourismus.de; Königswall 18a; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Opposite the Hauptbahnhof south exit.

Web M@nia Café (☎ 189 1848; Westenhellweg 136; per min €0.07; ☎ 10am-1am Mon-Sat, noon-1am Sun) Full-service internet café.

Sights**CITY CENTRE**

Although its streets still follow a medieval layout, Dortmund's city centre is essentially a creation of modern times and among the Ruhrgebiet's most popular shopping districts. However, commerce coexists beautifully with church treasures here, especially along the main artery, the pedestrianised Westenhellweg.

Near the Hauptbahnhof is the 14th-century **Petrikirche**, a Gothic hall church. Its showstopper is a massive Antwerp **altar** (1520), featuring 633 individually carved and gilded figurines in scenes depicting the Easter story. Note that the altar is closed in summer, exposing only the panels' painted outer side.

East along Westenhellweg, past the **Krügerpassage**, a shopping arcade built in 1912 in exuberant neo-Renaissance style, is the **Reinoldikirche** (1280), named after the city's patron saint. After he was martyred in Cologne, the carriage containing his coffin rolled all the way to Dortmund stopping on the spot of the church – or so the story goes. A life-sized statue of the saint flanks the choir with another of Charlemagne just opposite. Of outstanding artistic merit is the late Gothic **high altar** (ask nicely in the sacristy for a close-up look). The bell tower can be climbed.

Across the street, **Marienkirche** is the oldest of Dortmund's churches, and its Romanesque origins are still visible in the round-arched nave. The star exhibit here is the **Marienaltar** (1420), with a delicate triptych by local son Conrad von Soest. In the northern nave is the equally impressive **Berswordt Altar** (1385). Also note the rather frivolous wood reliefs on the choir stalls and the ethereal St Mary statue.

The **Museum am Ostwall** (☎ 502 3247; www.museendortmund.de; Ostwall 7; adult/concession €3/1.50, Sat free; ☎ 10am-5pm Sun, Tue, Wed & Fri, 10am-8pm Thu, noon-5pm Sat) specialises in 20th- and 21st-century art and is especially proud of its collection of paintings by Alexej von Jawlensky. Admission is more expensive for special exhibits.

An Art Deco former bank building houses the **Museum für Kunst & Kulturgeschichte**

(Museum of Art & Cultural History; ☎ 502 6028; www.museendortmund.de; Hansastrasse 3; adult/concession €3/1.50, free Sat; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun, to 8pm Thu). Exhibits take visitors from the Stone Age to the present. Highlights include re-created period rooms, a Roman gold treasure trove, a Romanesque triumphal cross and paintings by Caspar David Friedrich, Lovis Corinth and other outstanding artists.

North of the Hauptbahnhof, just beyond the multiplex cinema, is the **Mahn-und Gedenkstätte Steinwache** (☎ 502 5002; Steinstrasse 50; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun). A former Gestapo prison, it now houses a memorial exhibit about Dortmund during the Third Reich. A free English-language pamphlet is available.

Since 2006, Dortmund's beer tradition is creatively documented in the revived **Brauerei-Museum** (Brewery Museum; ☎ 840 0200; Steigerstrasse 14; adult/concession/family €1.50/0.75/4; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue, Wed & Fri-Sun, 10am-8pm Thu, noon-5pm Sat) inside the former Hansa brewery. Exhibits are an interesting hybrid of city history and the mysteries of commercial beer brewing. It's about 2km north of the Hauptbahnhof (U-Bahn 41 to Lortzingstrasse, then a 10-minute walk).

BEYOND THE CENTRE

Outside of the city centre are these two excellent Industrial Heritage Trail sites.

The **Zollern II/IV Colliery** (☎ 696 1111; www.industriemuseum.com; Grubenweg 5; adult/child/student €3.50/2/2.10; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) is one of eight industrial sites that form the Westphalian Industrial Museum. Considered a 'model mine' when operation began in 1902, it boasted state-of-the-art technology and fantastic architecture, including an Art Nouveau machine hall and an office building adorned with gables and onion-domed towers. An innovative exhibit documents the harsh realities of life as a miner, with plenty of interactive and children-oriented programmes. To get here, take the U47 to Huckarde Bushof, then bus 462 direction Dortmund-Marten to 'Industriemuseum Zollern'.

Never mind the unwieldy name, the **Deutsche Arbeitsschutzausstellung** (German Occupational Safety & Health Exhibition; ☎ 9071 4645; Friedrich-Henkel-Weg 1-25; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun) is a surprisingly fun and interactive museum that lets you experience working conditions of the past, present and future. Walk through a 'noise tunnel', sit in the cockpit of an Airbus, crank up an old printing machine

and learn what steps can be taken to ensure health and safety in the workspace. To get here take the S1 to Dortmund-Dorstfeld-Süd.

Sleeping

The tourist office makes free room reservations – call ☎ 1899 9111.

Ruhgebiet International Hostel (☎ 952 9977; www.ruhgebiet.de; Lindemannstrasse 78; dm €17-22, s/d without bathroom €35/48, d with bathroom €50; Ⓟ ☒ ☒) The young owners have poured their cash and hearts into making this sparkling new indie hostel a clean and comfortable hospitality zone. Up to 56 guests can stretch out in large rooms sleeping two to eight. It's steps away from the football stadium and close to the Kreuzviertel pub quarter. From the Hauptbahnhof, take any U-Bahn to Stadtgarten, then catch the U42 to Kreuzstrasse.

Ibis Dortmund (☎ 185 770; www.ibishotel.com; Märkische Strasse 73; r €47-62; Ⓟ ☒ ☒) This is one of the nicer contenders in this good-value chain. It's a 10-minute walk from the city centre and close to a supermarket and beer garden.

Cityhotel Dortmund (☎ 477 9660; www.cityhotel.dortmund.de; Silberstrasse 37-43; s €70-80, d €87-99; Ⓟ ☒) A mousy grey façade hides this jewel of a hotel where a palette evoking the ocean, sun and sand gives rooms and public areas a cheerful and fresh look. Nonsmoking rooms facing the courtyard are quietest, but noise isn't really an issue here, even though the city's hip party zone is only a short walk away.

Eating

Dortmund brims with pubs and restaurants, making it ideal for sampling the local brews and cuisine. Centres of action include Kleppingstrasse and Alter Markt. Southeast of here is the student-flavoured Kreuzviertel, with Arneckstrasse being one of the main drags (U42 to Möllerbrücke).

BarRock (☎ 206 3221; Kreuzstrasse 87; dishes €5-13; ☒ noon-1am Mon-Sat, 10am-1am Sun) Painted cherubs frolicking on the ceiling survey the scene at this charismatic locals' café in the Kreuzviertel. The food – baguettes to roast chicken – won't win awards but fills the tummy nicely. Reservations are advised for BarRock's famous Sunday brunch.

Rigoletto (☎ 150 4431; Kleppingstrasse 9-11; pizza & pasta €7-11, mains €11-15; ☒ 8.30am-1am Mon-Fri, 8.30am-3am Sat, 10am-midnight Sun) Sure, it's popular with the see-and-be-seen crowd, but this

high-energy restaurant also delivers substance with reliable Mediterranean classics and operatic décor mixing wood, wrought-iron and chandeliers. It's also a good place for breakfast, afternoon coffee or a drink at the bar.

Hövel's Hausbrauerei (☎ 914 5470; Hoher Wall 5-7; mains €8-15) A complete overhaul has turned this classic into a brew-pub for the 21st century, adding a touch of sleekness without sacrificing the characteristic rustic flair. The menu is custom-made for meat lovers and the libation of choice is, of course, the tasty house-brewed Bitterbier.

Ristorante Bei Marija (☎ 751 9571; Am Beilstück 48; mains €10-20; ☒ 6pm-midnight Tue-Sat) Like a hug from an old friend, Marija is warm and welcoming. The place looks like an overstuffed living room, the owner is a character and the Italian country fare mouth-watering. It's way off the tourist track; catch the U42 to An der Palmweide. Reservations recommended.

Other recommendations:

Am Alten Markt (☎ 572 217; Markt 3; mains €5-15; ☒ 11am-midnight Mon-Sat, 3pm-midnight Sun) Traditional Westphalian fare served in belt-loosening portions amid smokey ambience.

Liv'Inn Room (☎ 144 043; Augustastrasse 1; mains €8-13; ☒ dinner Mon-Sat, 10am-10pm Sun) Cosy resto-pub furnished grandma-style and serving wholesome salads, casseroles, crepes and other simple fare. Interesting toilets.

Drinking

Some of the places mentioned under Eating also make good drinking destinations.

Spirit (☎ 527 225; Helle 9; ☒ Mon-Sat) Don't show up early at this cultish rock haunt run by a local biker club (the nice kind, we're told). DJ Mimi plays whatever strikes his fancy but no pop or techno.

Live Station (☎ 914 3625; Königswall 11, Hauptbahnhof; ☒ Fri & Sat) This scene dinosaur still packs them in with various theme parties on Fridays and classic and contemporary chart busters on Saturdays, plus regular live gigs.

Domicil (☎ 862 9030; www.domicil-dortmund.de; Hansastrasse 7-11) Jazz, world and avant-garde music are the focus of this internationally renowned music club that's been booking promising newcomers and bona fide greats since 1969.

Entertainment

Signal Iduna Park (☎ 01805-309 000; www.bvb.de; tickets €11-50) A German insurance giant may have bought the naming rights, but that hasn't

changed the fact that Dortmund's Westfalenstadion (home base of the Borussia Dortmund team) is still one of the best football stadiums in the country.

Theater Dortmund (☎ 01805-517 0517; Hiltropwall 15) High-brow drama, opera and musicals are staged by this theatre. It has a second location at Hansastrasse 7.

Konzerthaus (☎ 01805-448 044; Brückstrasse 21) This snazzy new place presents top-flight classical concerts starring Dortmund's Philharmonic Orchestra or international guest performers.

On Friday and Saturday night hipsters gravitate to the new fun zone on the grounds of the former Thier brewery between Martinsstrasse and Hövelsstrasse in the centre. Half-a-dozen bars and clubs have set up shop here, including **Mendoza** (☎ 233 3239), an artsy cocktail bar; **Blauer Raum** (☎ 226 6504), a black music lounge and club; and **Sixx.pm** (☎ 9419 9888), a largish electronica club.

Getting There & Away

Air Berlin and easyJet are among the carriers serving **Dortmund Airport** (☎ 921 301; www.flughafen-dortmund.de), connected to the centre by the Airport Express bus (€5, 4.30am to 10.30pm, mostly hourly). Buses stop outside the Hauptbahnhof, a major hub with frequent ICE and IC trains in all directions and RE and S-Bahn trains to other Ruhrgebiet cities departing every few minutes.

Dortmund is on the A1, A2 and A45. The B1 runs right through the city and is the link between the A40 to Essen and the A44 to Kassel. It's very busy and often clogged.

Getting Around

For public transport, see p572. For a taxi call ☎ 144 444 or ☎ 194 10. The tourist office rents bikes for €4 per hour or €12 per day with a €30 deposit.

ELSEWHERE IN THE RUHRGEBIET

The Ruhrgebiet has plenty of other places of interest, many of them on the Industrial Heritage Trail (p571).

Oberhausen

☎ 0208 / pop 219,000

The city of Oberhausen has one of Germany's most unusual exhibit spaces, the **Gasometer** (☎ 850 3730; www.gasometer.de; Am Grafenbusch 90; adult/concession €6/4; ☒ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun). The giant barrel-shaped structure that once stored gas to

power blast furnaces now hosts *Feuer-Licht-Himmel* (Fire-Light-Sky) in the upper section; it's a light and sound installation by Berlin artist Christina Kubisch. Downstairs is a documentary exhibit about the history of the building and its transformation into an art space. You can also ride the glass elevator to a 117m platform with views over the entire western Ruhrgebiet.

Next door is the **Centro**, one of Europe's largest shopping malls with more than 200 shops, some 20 restaurants and entertainment venues, including a multiplex cinema. Little kids will likely be tempted by the **Centro Adventure Park** (☎ 456 780; unlimited rides adult/concession €12/8.50; ☒ 10am-6pm mid-Mar-Oct, days vary, call for details), a small amusement park. Also here is the largest **Sealife** (☎ 4448 8444; Zum Aquarium 1; adult/child/concession €13/11/12; ☒ from 10am, closing time varies), yet another instalment in this chain of walk-through aquariums that seems to be proliferating faster than sea slugs on Viagra.

Take any bus or tram that's going in the direction of Neue Mitte Oberhausen from platform one outside the Oberhausen Hauptbahnhof. By car, take the Oberhausen Osterfeld/Neue Mitte exit off the A42.

Oberhausen is well connected to other Ruhrgebiet cities, including directly by S-Bahn from Essen (€4, 17 minutes) and by RE train from Dortmund (€8.70, 40 minutes).

Duisburg

☎ 0203 / pop 500,000

Molten iron used to flow 24/7 from the fiery furnaces of the iron works, now creatively recycled into a unique adventure playground, the **Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord** (Emscherstrasse 71; admission free, activities vary; ☒ 24hr). You can free-climb its ore bunkers, take a diving course in the former gas tank, climb to the top of the blast furnace or balance on tightropes suspended between buildings. There's plenty of green space for drifting around, picnics or play, along with flower gardens and even a small farm with a petting zoo. At the **visitors centre** (☎ 429 1942; ☒ 10am-5pm Mon-Thu, 10am-9pm Fri-Sun Apr-Oct, reduced hours in winter) you can pick up information about the entire Industrial Heritage Trail and find out about guided tours, concerts and other events at the park. Next door, a restaurant-bar serves drinks, snacks and full meals.

Just outside the complex is the newish **DJH hostel** (☎ 417 900; www.djh.de; Lösörter Strasse 133; dm

under/over 26yr €20/23; (P) (X). From Duisburg Hauptbahnhof take tram 902 (direction Duisburg-Walsum) or 903 (direction Dinslaken) to Landschaftspark-Nord; from here it's a seven-minute walk via Emscherstrasse.

Duisburg is on a major rail line and served by ICE, IC and regional trains. The trip from either Düsseldorf or Essen costs €4 on RE or S-Bahn trains and takes about 15 minutes.

Bottrop

(☎) 02041 / pop 120,000

TETRAEDER

Egypt has them, so does Mexico and now there's one in the Ruhrgebiet: a pyramid, right here in the town of Bottrop. The **Tetraeder** (Tetrahedron; admission free; (🕒) 24hr) is a 50m-high skeletal construct made from steel pipes and open space. It graces the top of a former slag heap turned attractive landscape park, complete with trees, trails and benches. You can climb the Tetraeder via 'floating' staircases suspended from steel cables (yes, they swing when the wind's up), which lead to three viewing platforms, an experience not recommended for vertigo sufferers. Views of the surprisingly green yet undeniably industrial landscape are impressive rather than conventionally beautiful. At night, the Tetraeder becomes a light installation that you can see glowing from afar. Right next to it, the **alpincenter Bottrop** (☎ 70950; www.alpincenter.com; Prosperstrasse 299; day pass adult/concession from €33/22; (🕒) 9.30am-midnight) is the world's longest indoor alpine ski run (630m).

Take bus 262 from Bottrop Hauptbahnhof to Brakerstrasse.

JOSEF ALBERS MUSEUM

Fans of this famous Bauhaus artist won't want to miss the **Josef Albers Museum** (☎ 29716; Im Stadtgarten 20; admission free; (🕒) 10am-6pm Tue-Sun). Albers, who fled the Nazis for the US in 1933, is especially famous for his explorations of colour and spatial relationships, especially of squares. The works are housed in a starkly minimalist space that's like a visual metaphor for his works. Displays include examples from his famous series *Homage to the Square* as well as early lithographs from the Bottrop period such as *Arbeiterhäuser* (workers' homes).

MOVIE PARK GERMANY

The Ruhrgebiet's answer to Disneyland Paris, the sprawling **Movie Park Germany** (☎ 02045-8990; www.moviepark.de; Warner Allee 1; adult/senior & child

4-11yr €25.50/22, parking €5; (🕒) at least 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct; closed Nov-Mar) presents an entertaining mix of thrill rides, live-action shows, restaurants and shops. The High Fall Tower, which has you free-falling from a height of 65m, should satisfy even the most speed-crazed teen, while Wonderland Studios is a fantasyland for the little ones with fanciful rides and friendly animal characters. Actual opening hours vary; those shown here are the minimum.

The park is in Bottrop-Kirchhellen, about 15km north of Essen. There are direct RE connections hourly from Essen; get off at the Feldhausen stop. If you're driving, take the Kirchhellen-Nord exit off the A31, then follow the signs.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Bottrop is served by the A2 and A42 autobahns and the B223. S-Bahn and RE trains link it to other Ruhrgebiet cities such as Essen (€4, 15 minutes). The trip to/from Düsseldorf requires a change in Oberhausen or Duisburg (€8.70, one hour).

Gelsenkirchen

(☎) 0209 / 270,000

To football fans Gelsenkirchen is synonymous with Schalke 04, the legendary club that's long been a mainstay in the *Bundesliga*. In 2006, the city hosted five World Cup games in its spectacular new **Arena Aufschalke** (☎ 36180; www.schalke04.de; Ernst-Kuzorra-Weg 1), aka Veltins Arena, a multifunction stadium that counts a retractable glass roof and disappearing grass floor among its state-of-the-art features. Tours are offered only by prior arrangement; call (☎) 389 2900. Schalke fans can check out the new **club museum** (adult/youth €4/2; (🕒) 10am-7pm Tue-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun). Take tram 302 from the Gelsenkirchen Hauptbahnhof.

Gelsenkirchen's other major new draw is **Zoom Erlebniswelt** (☎ 954 50; www.zoom-erlebniswelt.de; Bleckstrasse 47; adult/child/student €12/8/9, parking €3; (🕒) 9am-6pm Mar & Oct, 9am-6.30pm Apr-Sep, 9am-5pm Nov-Feb), an imaginatively landscaped zoo where animals don't roam in cages but in habitats that re-create their natural surroundings as closely as possible. Rivers, a gushing waterfall, canyons and rock formations characterise the Alaska section, where grizzly bears lumber, timber wolves prowl, otters tumble and elks strut. Denizens of the Africa exhibit, which opened in 2006, include lions, giraffes and

zebras. Fencing is minimal and unobtrusive, yet you can get surprisingly close to even the fiercer animals thanks to ditches and glass walls. Asia is set to follow in 2007. Tram 301 goes straight to the zoo from the Gelsenkirchen Hauptbahnhof.

Gelsenkirchen is bisected by the A2 and A42 but only served by a minor rail line. The S-Bahn 2 makes frequent direct trips from Dortmund (€4, 34 minutes). Coming from Bochum, the best way to travel between the cities' main train stations is by tram 302 (€4, 30 minutes).

WESTPHALIA

MÜNSTER

(☎) 0251 / pop 269,000

When strolling around Münster's Altstadt, it's hard to imagine that nearly everything you see is only 60 years or so old. After near total destruction in WWII, the cultural capital of Westphalia opted for creating a carbon copy of its medieval centre rather than embracing the ideas of modern town planning. Although the decision epitomises the conservative mindset of locals, Münster is not mired in nostalgia. Its 50,000 students definitely keep the cobwebs out and help make a success out of alternative projects such as the Hafenviertel (old harbour quarter) redevelopment. More than anything, though, it's the 100,000 bicycles – called *Leeze* in local dialect – that quite literally bring energy and movement to this pretty and inviting city.

Orientation

Münster's tiny airport is about 20km north of town in Grevin (see p584 for travel between the airport and town). Many of the city's main sights are within the confines of the easy-to-walk Altstadt, a short walk northwest of the Hauptbahnhof via Windhorststrasse. The bus station is right outside the station's west exit. The Altstadt is encircled by the 4.8km Promenade, a car-free ring trail built on top of the former city fortifications; it's hugely popular with bicyclists.

Information

There are several banks in the centre, including a Sparkasse in the Münster Arkaden. **Altes Rathaus tourist office** (☎ 492 2724; Prinzipalmarkt 10; (🕒) 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun)

Main tourist office (☎ 492 2710; www.tourismus.muenster.de; Heinrich-Brüning-Strasse 9; (🕒) 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1pm Sat)

Poertgen Herder (☎ 490 140; Salzstrasse 56) Good selection of English books.

Post office (☎ 01802-3333; Domplatz) There's another branch at the Hauptbahnhof.

Raphaelslinik (☎ 500 70; Klosterstrasse 72) Medical services.

Stadtbücherei (☎ 492 4242; Alter Steinweg 11; per hr €0.50; (🕒) 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) Public library with internet access, international newspapers and magazines and clean toilets.

Sights

DOM ST PAUL

The two massive towers of Münster's cathedral, **Dom St Paul** (Domplatz; (🕒) 10am-6pm), match the proportions of this 110m-long structure and the vast square it overlooks. It's a three-nave construction built at a time when Gothic architecture began overtaking the Romanesque style in popularity. Enter from Domplatz via a porch (called the 'Paradise'), richly festooned with apostle sculptures. Inside, pay your respects to the **statue of St Christopher**, the patron saint of travellers, then make your way to the southern ambulatory with its **astronomical clock**. This marvel of 16th-century ingenuity indicates the time, the position of the sun, the movement of the planets, and the calendar. Crowds gather daily at noon (12.30pm Sunday) when the carillon starts up.

The **Domkammer** (cathedral treasury; ☎ 495 587; admission €1; (🕒) 11am-4pm Tue-Sun), which is reached via the cloisters, counts an 11th-century gem-studded golden head reliquary of St Paul among its finest pieces.

AROUND DOMPLATZ

Northwest of the Dom, the **Überwasserkirche** (officially known as Liebfrauenkirche) is a 14th-century Gothic hall church with handsome stained-glass windows. The nickname was inspired by its location right by the Aa, a tiny stream whose tree-lined promenade makes for lovely strolling.

In the 16th century, the iconoclastic Anabaptists 'cleansed' this church of all sculptures, but miraculously many ended up at the **Westfälisches Landesmuseum** (Regional Museum; ☎ 590 701; Domplatz 10; adult/concession €3.50/2.10; (🕒) 10am-6pm Tue-Sun). Its well-respected art collection spans from the Middle Ages to modern times and includes works by the famous Westphalian

painter, Conrad von Soest. Fans of August Macke and other expressionists should make a beeline to the 2nd floor.

For an in-depth study of the lithographic work of another 20th-century master, head to the **Graphikmuseum Pablo Picasso** (☎ 414 4710; www.graphikmuseum-picasso-muenster.de; Königstrasse 5; adult/concession €5/4; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat

& Sun), the first German museum dedicated to the Spanish artist. It shows rotating selections drawn from among nearly 800 graphics, including still life and bull-fighting scenes.

PRINZIPALMARKT

Münster's main artery is the Prinzipalmarkt, lined by restored Patrician town houses with

arcades sheltering elegant boutiques and cafés. At its centre stands the Gothic **Rathaus**, site of the signing of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which marked the first step in ending the calamitous Thirty Years' War. The signing took place in the **Friedenssaal** (Hall of Peace; ☎ 492 2724; adult/concession €1.50/1; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun), a spectacular hall with intricately carved wood panelling. There's also an odd display of a golden drinking vessel in the shape of a rooster, a mummified hand and a slipper. As you exit, note the adjacent **Stadtweinhaus** (City Wine House), a Renaissance gem with porticoes that was once used for wine storage and now contains a restaurant.

Further north is the late-Gothic **St Lambertikirche** (1450) with its landmark openwork spire from which dangle three wrought-iron cages. These once held the corpses of the Anabaptist leader Jan van Leyden and his deputies. This Protestant sect, which believed in adult baptism, polygamy and communal property, was routed in 1535 by troops of the prince-bishop. Van Leyden and his cohorts were publicly tortured with red-hot tongs – now among the treasures on view at the **Stadtmuseum** (☎ 492 4503; Salzstrasse 28; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun) – then stuck in the cages as a warning to all wannabe Protestants.

Just south of Prinzipalmarkt is the **Münster Arkaden**, a gorgeous new shopping mall with patterned marble flooring and a central glass dome.

BAROQUE BUILDINGS

The architect that left his mark on Münster more than any other was Johann Conrad Schlaun (1695–1773). He was a master of the Westphalian baroque, a more subdued, less exuberant style than in southern Germany. A most exquisite example of Schlaun's vision is the 1757 **Erdrostenhof** (Salzstrasse 38), a lavish private mansion. Nearby, the equally stunning 1753 **Clemenskirche** (Klemensstrasse) boasts a domed ceiling-fresco supported by turquoise faux-marble pillars. Less pristinely preserved is the 1773 **Schloss** (Schlossplatz), the former residence of the prince-bishops and now the main university building.

OUTSIDE THE ALTSTADT

A 10-minute walk southeast of the Hauptbahnhof takes you to the **Hafenviertel** (aka Kreativkai), Münster's revitalised old harbour.

Old halls and brick warehouses now house a theatre, artists studios, a children's book publisher and other offices alongside a fun mixture of restaurants, bars and dance clubs. Its edgy charms are best sampled sitting outdoors and watching cargo barges cutting along the Dortmund-Ems canal. In summer, there's swimming in the canal. To get to the Hafenviertel, exit the Hauptbahnhof to the east via Bremer Platz, follow Bremer Strasse south, cross Hansaring and it will be on your left.

Another recreational area is the Aasee lake, southwest of the Altstadt, where you can picnic and enjoy water sports. Halfway down its western shore is the **Mühlenhof** (☎ 981 200; www.muehlenhof-muenster.de; Theo-Breider-Weg 1; adult/child/student/family €4/2/2.50/10; ☎ 10am-6pm daily mid-Mar–Oct, 1-4.30pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4.30pm Sun Nov–mid-Mar), an open-air cluster of historical Westphalian buildings, including a mill and bakery. Dinosaurs and the universe are among the attractions at the **Naturkundemuseum & Planetarium** (Natural History Museum; ☎ 591 05; Sentruper Strasse 285; adult/concession €5.50/3; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun), while highlights of the **Allwetterzoo** (☎ 890 40; Sentruper Strasse 315; adult/concession €11.50/5.75; ☎ 9am-6pm Apr-Sep, 9am-5pm Oct & Mar, 9am-4pm Nov-Feb) include the dolphin show and the horse museum with fun exhibits about the region's equestrian heritage.

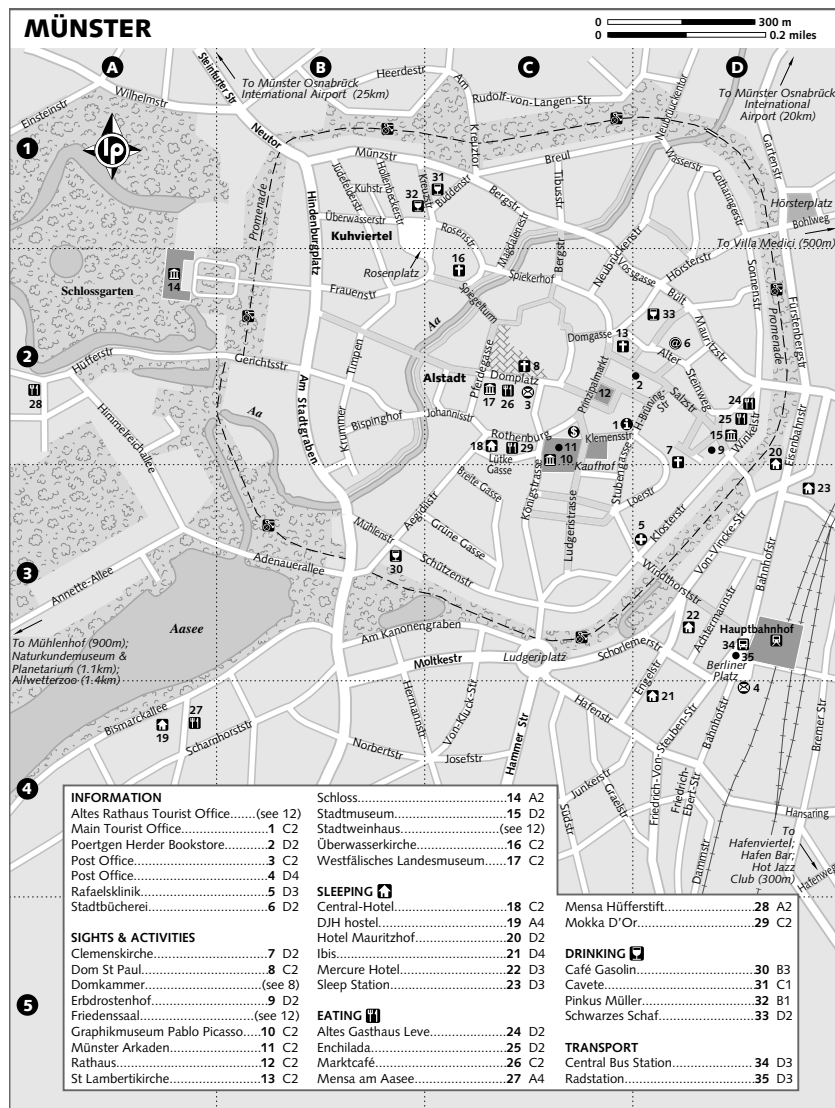
Sleeping

The tourist office operates a **reservation hotline** (☎ 492 2726; ☎ 8am-10pm).

Sleep Station (☎ 482 8155; www.sleep-station.de; Wolbecker Strasse 1; dm €14-20, s/d €28/44, linen €3; ☎ ☎) This colourful hostel is about 200m from the Hauptbahnhof. Facilities are shared in all but two of the carpeted rooms outfitted with one to eight beds. There's free coffee and tea, and a guest kitchen. Check-in is from 5pm to 8pm.

Mercure Hotel (☎ 41710; www.mercure.com; Engelstrasse 39; s €70-130, d €90-150; ☎ ☎ ☎) It's a chain so don't expect too much personality from this one. What you will find are 156 handsome rooms with a bevy of mod cons. The appealing public areas invite lounging and the sauna and steam bath are welcome relaxation zones after a busy day of sightseeing. Breakfast is €15.

Central-Hotel (☎ 510 150; www.central-hotel-muenster.de; Aegidiistrasse 1; s €85-105, d €105-130, tr €115-150; ☎ ☎ ☎) This small and personably run 20-room hotel has so many admirers that it's often fully booked. The owners are avid art



supporters who don't mind sharing views of their originals with guests.

Hotel Mauritzhof (☎ 417 20; www.mauritzhof.de; Eisenbahnstrasse 17; s €101-158, d €116-173, ste €188-203; ☒ ☒) Bold colours, plenty of glass and natural wood and extravagant designer furniture turn this 37-room property into a mod hotspot. The generous lobby-lounge is a good spot for a healthful breakfast (€15) or for winding down the day with a snack or glass of wine. There's free wi-fi.

Also recommended:

DJH hostel (☎ 530 280; www.djh.de; Bismarckallee 31; dm/d €22.50/60; ☒ ☒ ☒) Take bus 10 or 34 to Hoppendamm, followed by a 500m walk.

Ibis (☎ 481 30; www.ibishotel.com; Engelstrasse 53; r €61-78; ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒) Good-value cookie-cutter property.

Eating

Mokka D'Or (☎ 482 8591; Rothenburg 14-16; mains €5-12; ☒ 9am-1am Mon-Sat, 11am-1am Sun) Perhaps it's the breezy urbanity, or the Italian breakfasts, or the yummy pizzas delivered piping hot from the wood stove. Fact is, this convivial nosher has been a local bestseller for years. That's *dolce vita*, Westphalian style. Enter via the alleyway.

Marktcafé (☎ 575 85; Domplatz 7; mains €5-13; ☒ 9am-1am) Views of the Dom are gratis at this contemporary café, which draws everyone from students to suits, tourists to punters, especially on market days (Wednesday and Saturday). The food is fresh and tasty, and Sunday's brunch buffet (€8.95) an institution.

Altes Gasthaus Leve (☎ 455 95; Alter Steinweg 37; mains €6-16; ☒ 11.30am-11pm) Münster's oldest inn (since 1607) is a trippy time-war where painted tiles, oil paintings and copper etchings form a suitably rustic backdrop to the hearty Westphalian fare. Dishes such as lima bean stew or sweet and sour beef sound more challenging than they are.

Enchilada (☎ 455 66; Artzkarrengasse 12; mains €8-15; ☒ dinner) The spectacular setting in a resurrected medieval ballroom, two happy hours (6pm to 8pm and after 11pm) and tasty Tex-Mex ensure that this place is never without a crowd. Nice terrace in summer.

Villa Medici (☎ 342 18; Ostmarktstrasse 15; mains €25-40, menu around €40; ☒ dinner Tue-Sat) If you're in need of a first-class culinary journey, book a table at this Italian gourmet temple whose reputation extends well beyond city borders. It's a fairly formal affair, but even first-timers are greeted warmly by the charming owners.

Not only students will enjoy a meal at one of Münster's superb *Mensen* (university cafeterias) where you can fill up for €5 or less. Our favourites:

Mensa am Aasee (Bismarckallee 11; ☒ lunch Mon-Sat, dinner Mon-Sat) Huge, modern with lake views, salad and vegetable bars and grill and wok stations.

Mensa Hüfferstift (Hüfferstrasse 27; ☒ 7.30am-2.30pm Mon-Fri) Paella, pasta, fish, schnitzel, salad and more with views over Münster's rooftops.

Drinking

Münster's party-happy students fuel an eclectic pub and club scene.

Hafen Bar (☎ 289 7810; Hafengeweg 26a) Hipsters flock to this bar in Hafenviertel. It's a stylish glass cube with complexion-friendly lighting and is a great place to sip cocktails.

Hot Jazz Club (☎ 6866 7909; Hafengeweg 26b) Also in the trendy Hafenviertel, this subterranean bar hosts live music of all stripes, not only jazz.

Café Gasolin (☎ 510 5897; Aegidiistrasse 45; ☒ 11am-3am) Snazzily converted from a '50s gas station, Café Gasolin is a good spot for a nightcap. In the afternoon, their yummy cakes and latte macchiatos make for a great sugar fix. Prices are low, quality is not.

North of the Dom, the traditional student quarter – the Kuhviertel – teems with such time-honoured classics as **Cavete** (☎ 457 00; Kreuzstrasse 38) and the brew-pub **Pinkus Müller** (☎ 451 51; Kreuzstrasse 4; ☒ closed Sun) with its typical Westphalian décor. The **Schwarzes Schaf** (☎ 484 3577; Alter Fischmarkt 26; ☒ Mon-Sat) is mostly a regular pub, but at weekends the attached historic ballroom morphs into a full-on party den with several dance floors.

Getting There & Away

The **Münster Osnabrück International Airport** (☎ 02571-943 360; www.fmo.de) has low-cost flights on Air Berlin from London, Rome, Barcelona and other destinations.

Münster is on an IC line with regular links to points north and south and frequent trains to the Ruhrgebiet cities. The city is on the A1 from Bremen to Cologne and is near the starting point of the A43 direction Wuppertal. It is also at the crossroads of the B51, B54 and B219.

Getting Around

Buses connect the airport and the Hauptbahnhof every half-hour (€5, 40 minutes). Drivers should take the B219.

Bus drivers sell single tickets for €1.30 or €1.90, depending on the distance. Day passes are €3.45 (valid after 9am). For information, call ☎ 01803-504 030.

Hire bikes (€7/16 per one/three days) at **Radstation** (☎ 484 0170; Berliner Platz 27a; ☒ 5.30am-11pm Mon-Fri, 7am-11pm Sat & Sun) outside the Hauptbahnhof. The tourist office has cycling maps.

AROUND MÜNSTER

Münster is surrounded by the **Münsterland**, home to about 100 well-preserved castles and palaces, many of them protected by moats. In these rural flatlands, water was often the only way for local rulers to keep out the 'rabble' and rebels.

The region is a dream for cyclists, with over 4500km of well signposted trails (called *Pättkes* in local dialect), including the 100 Schlösser Route (Route of 100 Palaces) that allows you to hop from one castle to the next. Bicycles may be hired in Münster (above) and at practically all local train stations. Many castles are also served by public transport, though service can be sketchy or cumbersome, especially at weekends.

For route planning, lodging and general information, call tollfree ☎ 0800-939 2919, check www.muensterland-tourism (in German) or contact the Münster tourist office (p581).

The following are snapshots of a quartet of castles that offer the greatest tourist appeal and, except for Schloss Nordkirchen, are relatively accessible from Münster.

Burg Hülshoff

About 10km west of Münster, **Burg Hülshoff** (☎ 02534-1052; Schonebeck 6; adult/concession €3.50/3; ☒ 9.30am-6pm Feb-mid-Dec) is the birthplace of one of Germany's pre-eminent women of letters, Annette von Droste-Hülshoff (1797-1848). The red-brick Renaissance chateau is embedded in a lovely – partly groomed, partly romantic – park (admission free). The interior, which consists of period rooms furnished in the style of the poet's day, can be explored with an audio-guide. Bus 564 makes the trip out here from Münster's Hauptbahnhof (€1.85, 22 minutes).

Haus Rüschaus

Annette von Droste-Hülshoff did some of her finest writing at the smaller **Haus Rüschaus** (☎ 02533-1317; Am Rüschaus 81; adult/concession €3/2;

☒ tours hourly 10am-noon & 2-5pm Tue-Sun May-Oct, fewer tours Nov-Apr) where she lived for 20 years from 1826. The building was once the private home of star architect Johann Conrad Schlaun, who magically morphed a farmhouse into a baroque minimansion backed by a formal garden (always open). It's in the suburb of Nienberge, about 3km north of Burg Hülshoff, and served by bus 5 from Münster's Hauptbahnhof (€1.85, 20 minutes).

Burg Vischering

The quintessential medieval moated castle, **Burg Vischering** (☎ 02591-799 00; Berenbrok 1) is Westphalia's oldest (1271), and the kind that conjures romantic images of knights and damsels. Surrounded by a system of ramparts and ditches, the complex consists of an outer castle and the main castle, now a **museum** (adult/concession €2.50/2; ☒ 10am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, until 4.30pm Nov-Mar).

Burg Vischering is in Lüdinghausen, about 30km south of Münster. Catch bus S90/91 or S92 at the Hauptbahnhof to Lüdinghausen (€5, 45 minutes), then walk for about 10 minutes.

Schloss Nordkirchen

On an island surrounded by a sprawling, manicured park, **Schloss Nordkirchen** (☎ 02596-9330; ☒ 11am-5pm Sun May-Sep, 2-4pm Sun Oct-Apr & by prior arrangement) is an imposing baroque red-brick structure nicknamed the 'Westphalian Versailles'. On a nice day, the palace is well worth visiting for the gardens and the exterior alone. Since it's used as a state college for financial studies, the interior – with its stuccoed ceilings, festival hall and dining room – can only be seen on guided tours (tours €2).

Schloss Nordkirchen is 8km southeast of Lüdinghausen in the hamlet of Nordkirchen, which is incredibly poorly served by public transport. Consult your bike map to find the route between Burg Vischering and Schloss Nordkirchen.

SOEST

☎ 02921 / pop 48,000

Soest is a quiet, spire-studded town of half-timbered houses lining a maze of idyllic, crooked lanes. It lies about 45km east of Dortmund and is the northern gateway to the Sauerland. Although devastated by WWII bombing raids, it has miraculously preserved much of its medieval character. Soest is a

'green' town, not only because of its many parks and gardens but also for the colour of the local sandstone used in building its town wall, churches and other structures. Brimming with treasure, these churches reflect the wealth Soest enjoyed during its medieval heyday as a member of the Hanseatic League. Its romantic looks have also charmed modern artists, including expressionists Emil Nolde, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff and native son Wilhelm Morgner.

Orientation

The train and bus stations are on the north side of the ring road enclosing Soest's centre. Follow the pedestrianised Brüderstrasse south to the Markt, tourist office, Dom and the churches.

Information

There are several banks with ATMs around Markt.

Post office (Hospitalgasse 3)

Tourist office (☎ 6635 0050; www.soest.de; Teichmühlengasse 3; ☎ 9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat year-round, 11am-1pm Sun Apr-Oct)

Sights

Much of Soest's historic centre is still encircled by a moated **defensive wall**, which today has a parklike appearance and is great for strolling and picnicking.

Fans of medieval churches have plenty to keep them busy in Soest. Closest to the Hauptbahnhof is the exquisite late-Gothic hall church, **St Maria zur Wiese** (Wiesenstrasse; ☎ 11am-4pm Mon-Sat, noon-4pm Sun), also known as Wiesenkirche and easily recognised by its lacy neo-Gothic twin spires. These are undergoing restoration and will remain under wraps until at least 2023 (!). Inside, it's the delicate proportions and vibrant stained-glass windows that create an ethereal atmosphere. An endearing feature is the window above the north portal, which shows Jesus and his disciples enjoying a **Westphalian Last Supper** of ham, beer and rye bread.

On Hohe Gasse, **St Maria zur Höhe** (☎ 10am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, noon-5pm Sun Apr-Sep, to 4pm Oct-Mar), better known as Hohnkirche, is a squat, older and architecturally less accomplished hall church. Its sombreness is brightened by beautiful ceiling frescoes, an altar ascribed to the Westphalian painter known as the Master of Liesborn, and the *Scheibenkreuz*,

a huge wooden cross on a circular board more typically found in Scandinavian churches; in fact, it's the only such cross in Germany. Look for the light switch on your left as you enter to shed a little light on the matter.

Three more churches are near Markt, a short walk west via the **Grosser Teich**, a placid duck pond and park where the tourist office is now housed in an old water mill. The dignified tower of **St Patrokli** (Propst-Nübel-Strasse 2; ☎ 10am-6pm), a three-nave Romanesque structure partly adorned with delicate frescoes, looks down upon the **Rathaus**, a baroque confection with an arched portico on the western side.

Adjacent to this ensemble is the **Petrikirche** (Petrikirchhof 10; ☎ 9.30am-noon & 2-5.30pm Tue-Fri, to 4.30pm Sat, 2-5.30pm Sun), with Romanesque origins in the 8th century and a choir from Gothic times, all topped by a baroque onion dome. It's adorned with wall murals and features an unusual modern altar made from the local green sandstone, glass and brushed stainless steel.

The tiny **Nikolaikapelle** (Thomästrasse; ☎ 11am-noon Tue, Wed & Sun) is a few steps southeast of St Patrokli. It's a pity it's rarely open, for its almost mystical simplicity is enlivened by a masterful altar painting that may be the work of 15th-century artist Conrad von Soest (born in Dortmund).

Sleeping

DJH hostel (☎ 162 83; www.jugendherberge.de; Kaiser-Friedrich-Platz 2; dm under/over 26yr €15.60/18.60; ☎ ☒) Wallet watchers should check out this pleasantly renovated hostel.

Hotel Stadt Soest (☎ 362 20; www.hotel-stadt-soest.de; Brüderstrasse 50; s €45, d €75-90; ☎ ☒) At this low-key property, rooms pair aodgepodge of old-fashioned furniture with such modern amenities as in-room DVDs (on request) and free wi-fi. It's in the pedestrian zone, just south of the train station.

Hotel Im Wilden Mann (☎ 150 71; www.im-wilden-mann.de; Am Markt 11; s €49, d €78-85) This central landmark hotel in a portly half-timbered town house has comfortable rooms furnished in rustic country style, as well as a fine restaurant.

Eating

Local specialities include the Soester *pumpernickel*, a rough-textured rye bread made entirely without salt, and the *Bullenaug* (bull's eye), a creamy mocha liqueur.

Der Kater (☎ 135 44; Nöttenstrasse 1; dishes €3-8; ☎ 10am-midnight) For more youthful flair try Der Kater, a bistro-pub with good pizza, salads and other casual fare.

Bontempi im Park (☎ 166 31; Im Theodor-Heuss-Park; pizza & pasta €6-10, mains €10-15; ☎ 10am-10pm) In fine weather, the idyllic park setting next to a duck pond is the biggest selling point of this popular bistro, but the Mediterranean menu convinces too. Come for breakfast, snacks, ice cream, coffee or a full meal.

Pilgrim Haus (☎ 1828; Jakobstrasse 75; snacks €6-10, mains €14-20; ☎ dinner Mon & Wed-Fri) This charming restaurant is similar but more upmarket than Brauerei Christ and claims to be Westphalia's oldest inn (since 1304).

Brauerei Christ (☎ 155 15; Walburger Strasse 36; mains €8-18; ☎ noon-11pm) History oozes from every nook and cranny of this warren of living-room-style rooms stuffed with musical instruments, oil paintings and unique knick-knacks. Hunker down at polished tables for Westphalian specialities or any of its 14 schnitzel variations. Nice beer garden.

Getting There & Away

Soest is easily reached by train from Dortmund (€9, 40 minutes) and is also regularly connected to Paderborn (€9, 35 minutes) and Münster (€12.10, 50 minutes). If you're driving, take the Soest exit from the A44. Soest is also at the crossroads of the B1, B229 and B475.

PADERBORN

☎ 05251 / pop 140,000

About 50km east of Soest, Paderborn is the largest city in eastern Westphalia and offers an intriguing blend of medieval marvels and hi-tech. It derives its name from the Pader which, at 4km, is Germany's shortest river. About 200 springs surfacing in the Paderquellgebiet, a landscaped park in the city centre, spurt out an average of 5000L per second.

Charlemagne used the royal seat and bishopric he had established here to control the Christianisation of the Saxon tribes. A visit by Pope Leo III in 799 led to the establishment of the Western Roman Empire, a precursor to the Holy Roman Empire, and Charlemagne's coronation as its emperor in Rome the following year. Paderborn remains a pious place to this day – churches abound, and religious sculpture and motifs adorn façades, fountains and parks. Many of the city's 14,000 students

are involved in theological studies (economics and technology are other major fields).

Orientation

Tiny Paderborn-Lippstadt Airport is 18km southwest of town. Most sights are conveniently bunched up in the largely pedestrianised Altstadt, which is encircled by a ring road and small enough to explore on foot. The Hauptbahnhof is just outside this ring. To get to Marienplatz (with the tourist office), the Dom and other sights, exit right onto Bahnhofstrasse and continue straight via busy Westernstrasse, the main shopping street. Alternatively, you can take bus 2, 4, 8 or 9 to Rathausplatz.

Information

Several banks with ATMs can be found along Westernstrasse and around the Dom and Rathaus.

Linnemann (☎ 285 50; Westernstrasse 31) Bookshop.

Post office (☎ 01802-3333; Liliengasse 2) Off Westernstrasse.

Raffles Internet Bar (☎ 282 507; 1st fl, Libori-Galerie, Kamp 30-32; per hr €2; ☎ 9.30am-1am)

St-Vincenz Hospital (☎ 860; Busdorf 2)

Tourist office (☎ 882 980; www.paderborn.de; Marienplatz 2a; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat Nov-Mar)

Sights

CITY CENTRE

Paderborn's massive **Dom** (Markt 17; ☎ 10am-6.30pm), a three-nave Gothic hall church, is a good place to start exploring the city. Enter through the southern portal (called 'Paradies'), adorned with delicate carved figures, then turn your attention to the **high altar** and the pompous **memorial tomb of Dietrich von Fürstenberg**, a 17th-century bishop. Signs point the way to the Dom's most endearing feature, the so-called **Dreihäsenfenster**, a unique trompe l'oeil window in the cloister. Its tracery depicts three hares, ingeniously arranged so that each has two ears, even though there are only three ears in all.

The hall-like **crypt**, one of the largest in Germany, contains the grave and relics of St Liborius, the city's patron saint. To see the famous Liborius shrine, though, visit the **Erzbischöfliches Diözesanmuseum** (☎ 125 1400; Markt 17; adult/concession €2.50/1.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), housed in an incongruously modernist structure outside the Dom. Its surprisingly attractive interior brims with church treasures,

the most precious of which are kept in the basement, including the gilded shrine and prized portable altars. Upstairs, the one piece not to be missed is the Imad Madonna, an exquisite 11th-century lindenwood statue.

Paderborn's proud **Rathaus** (1616) with ornate gables, oriels and other decorative touches is typical of the Weser Renaissance architectural style. South of the Rathaus is the **Marktkirche** (Rathausplatz; ☎ 9am-6pm), a largely baroque galleried basilica, where pride of place goes to the dizzying high altar. A soaring symphony of wood and gold, it is an exact replica of the 17th-century original destroyed in WWII. Completely rebuilt using photographs and ingenuity, it only returned to this spot in 2004.

Rathausplatz blends into Marienplatz with its delicate **Mariensäule** (St Mary's Column) and **Heising'sche Haus**, an elaborate 17th-century patrician mansion that shares a wall with the tourist office. The **Abdinghofkirche** (Am Abdinghof; ☎ 11am-6pm May-Sep) is easily recognised by its twin Romanesque towers. Once a Benedictine monastery, it's been a Protestant church since 1867 and is rather austere with white-washed and unadorned walls and a flat wooden ceiling.

At the foot of the Abdinghofkirche lies the **Paderquellgebiet**, a small park perfect for relaxing by the gurgling springs of the Pader and with nice views of the Dom. This is also the starting point of a lovely walk along the little river to **Schloss Neuhaus**, a moated palace about 5km northwest, which hosts frequent cultural events in summer.

East along Am Abdinghof to the north of the Dom are the remnants of the **Carolingian Kaiserpfalz**, Charlemagne's palace where that fateful meeting with Pope Leo took place. It was destroyed by fire and replaced in the 11th century by the **Ottonian-Salian Kaiserpfalz**, which has been reconstructed as faithfully as possible atop the original foundations. Inside is the **Museum in der Kaiserpfalz** (☎ 105 110; Am Ikenberg 2; adult/concession €2.50/1.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), which presents excavated items from the early Middle Ages. Immediately adjacent is the tiny and beautiful **Bartholomäuskapelle** (☎ 10am-6pm), built in 1017 and the oldest hall church north of the Alps, with otherworldly acoustics.

HEINZ NIXDORF MUSEUMSFORUM (HNF)

Not only techies will enjoy the **HNF** (☎ 306 600; www.hnf.de; Fürstenallee 7; adult/concession €4/2; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun), a fascinating romp

through 5000 years of information technology, from cuneiform to cyberspace. Established by the local founder of the Nixdorf Computer AG (since swallowed by bigger corporations), it displays calculating machines, typewriters, cash registers, punch-card systems, manual telephone exchanges, accounting machines and other time-tested gadgets, although the heart of the museum clearly belongs to the computer age. Most memorable is the full-scale replica of **Eniac**, a room-sized vacuum-tube computer developed for the US Army in the 1940s that became the forerunner of the modern computer. These days, the data it held fits onto a teensy microchip.

There are plenty of machines to touch, push and prod as well as computer games and a virtual-reality theatre. English-language explanatory panels are only sporadic, but a comprehensive museum guide in English is available for €5. To get here, catch bus 11 from the Hauptbahnhof to Museumsforum.

Sleeping

Galerie-Hotel Abdinghof (☎ 122 40; www.galerie-hotel.de; Bachstrasse 1; s/d €75/92; ☎ ☎) In a 1563 stone building overlooking the Paderquellgebiet, this is Paderborn's most unconventional hotel. Rooms are named after famous artists and decorated in styles ranging from country-rustic to elegant-feminine. Original art graces the downstairs café-restaurant.

Hotel Stadthaus (☎ 188 9910; www.hotel-stadthaus.de; Hathumarstrasse 22; s/d €86/103; ☎ ☎) An air of quiet elegance pervades this 34-room hotel spread over two separate but equally delightful buildings. Free wine and bottled water are welcome perks, and so is the sauna for relaxing. The restaurant serves light meals.

Also recommended:

DJH hostel (☎ 220 55; Meinwerkstrasse 16; dm under/over 26yr Mar-Oct €15.60/18.60, Nov-Feb €14/17; ☎ ☎) Well-run and central hostel. Take bus 2 to Detmolder Tor.

Hotel Campus Lounge (☎ 892 070; www.campuslounge.de; Mersinweg 2; s/d €80/90; ☎ ☎) Warm and welcoming property near the university with great views from the 'panorama rooms' and free DSL and wi-fi.

Krawinkel Hotel (☎ 693 990; www.hotel-krawinkel.de; Karlstrasse 33; s/d €90/100; ☎ ☎) Comfortable, contemporary suite with small kitchens, plenty of work space and sofas.

Eating

Curry Company (☎ 387 7414; Kamp 10; dishes €2-8; ☎ 11am-midnight) 'Gourmet snack' is not an

oxymoron at this artsy sausage parlour where you can pair your wurst with such delicious homemade sauces as truffle mayonnaise, coriander-chilli sauce and classic curry.

Café Central (☎ 296 888; Rathauspassage; mains €4-9) This local favourite recently went sophisticated with shiny leather seating, a long bar and an elegant frieze. Fortunately, it hasn't sacrificed its laid-back vibe and is still a great hang-out for breakfast, a light meal or a drink. It's in the Rathauspassage (enter from Rosenstrasse).

Deutsches Haus (☎ 221 36; Kisau 9; mains €7-19; ☎ 8.30am-1am) Rustic beams and woodsy booths combine with colourful Art Deco lamps at this popular German restaurant. All the classics are here, including 10 schnitzel variations.

Trattoria Il Postino (☎ 296 170; Rathauspassage; mains €9-19; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Locals intent on superior Italian food flock to this snazzy, glass-fronted restaurant with fresh flowers, crisp tablecloths and a big central bar. The chef does creative things with fresh pasta, but it's the meat and fish dishes that reveal the full extent of his skills. Enter from Jühenplatz.

Getting There & Away

AirBerlin offers direct flights between London-Stansted and the tiny **Paderborn-Lippstadt Airport** (☎ 02955-770; www.flughafen-paderborn-lippstadt.de), which is connected to the Hauptbahnhof by bus 400 and 460.

Paderborn has direct IC or ICE trains every two hours to Kassel-Wilhelmshöhe (€21 to €23, 1¼ hours) and regional connections to Dortmund (€17.60, 1¼ hours) and other Ruhrgebiet cities. Trains to Soest (€9, 35 minutes) leave several times hourly.

Paderborn is on the A33, which connects with the A2 in the north and the A44 in the south. The B1, B64 and B68 also go through Paderborn.

Getting Around

Bus rides cost €1.15 for short trips, €1.70 for longer ones and €4.60 for a day pass. **Radstation** (☎ 870 740; Bahnhofstrasse 29; ☎ 5.30am-10.30pm) at the Hauptbahnhof rents bicycles for €9 per 24 hours.

SAUERLAND

Even if you've never heard of the Sauerland, you're probably familiar with its most famous product: beer – or Warsteiner Pils to be

precise – made by Germany's largest brewery in the town of Warstein. Otherwise, this forested upland region in the southeast of North Rhine-Westphalia serves mostly as an easy getaway for Ruhrgebiet residents. There are a few museums and castles, but the Sauerland's primary appeal lies in nature. Nordic walking and hiking are big here, with some 20,000km of marked trails, mostly through beech and fir forest. For cyclists, Bike Arena Sauerland covers 1400km on 37 routes. Reservoirs and lakes are popular with swimmers, windsurfers and boaters, and in winter the higher elevations often get enough snow to allow for decent downhill and Nordic skiing. The area is also rich in caves filled with bizarrely shaped formations.

The Sauerland is best explored under your own steam, although even the smallest towns are served by buses or trains. Local tourist offices abound or call the central hotline at ☎ 0180-509 6980. Staff here can also book private rooms and hotels.

ALTENA

☎ 02352 / pop 22,200

In a steep, narrow valley carved by the Lenne River, Altena has built its fortune on producing industrial wire since making mail-shirts for medieval knights. Despite its scenic setting, it wouldn't be worth a stop were it not for the majestic **Burg Altena**, a quintessential medieval castle and 1912 birthplace of the youth hostel movement. The world's first hostel, with dark dorms sporting wooden triple bunks, now forms part of the newly revamped **castle museum** (☎ 966 7034; Fritz-Thomee-Strasse 80; adult/concession/family €5/2.50/10; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Tue-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun). This is a series of 28 themed rooms, each zeroing in on a different aspect of regional history, often in a visually pleasing and engaging fashion. You'll see some fancy historic weapons and armour, but also an exhibit on the Sauerland under the Nazis. Plan on spending at least 90 minutes to see it all.

Admission is also good at the **Deutsches Drahtmuseum**, about 300m downhill. It has hands-on displays on the many facets of wire from its manufacture to its use in industry, communications and art.

Altena's **tourist office** (☎ 209 295; www.altena-tourismus.de; Lüdenscheider Strasse 22) keeps erratic hours, so call ahead if possible.

You won't have to sleep in triple bunks but staying at Altena's **DJH hostel** (☎ 235 222; www.djh.de;

Fritz-Thomee Strasse 80; dm under/over 26yr €15.60/18.60; ☒), which is inside the old castle, is still a nostalgic treat.

The castle and hostel are about a 15-minute walk from the train station. Altena is served by regional train from Hagen.

ATTENDORN

☎ 02722 / pop 24,500

The main attraction of Attendorn, a typical Sauerland town on the northern shore of the Biggesee lake, is the **Atta-Höhle** (☎ 937 50; Finnentropfer Strasse 39; tours adult/child €6/4.50; ☒) 9.30am-4.30pm May-Sep, reduced hours Oct-Apr), one of Germany's largest and most impressive caves. The 40-minute tour takes you past a subterranean lake and stalagmites and stalactites shaped into curtains, domes, columns and shields.

The Biggesee lake is great for water sports as well as lake cruises, which are operated by **Personenschiffahrt Biggesee** (☎ 02761-965 90; www.personenschiffahrt-biggesee.de; €8/4.50; ☒) Apr-Oct).

Attendorn's **tourist office** (☎ 4897; www.attendorn.net; Rathauspassage; ☒) 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri year-round, 10am-1pm Sat Jun-Sep) can help out with accommodation.

A memorable place to spend the night is **Burg Schnellenberg** (☎ 6940; www.burg-schnellenberg.de; s €87-107, d €125-170; ☐ ☒), a 17th-century castle-hotel with gourmet restaurant perched high above town. It's pretty formal, so bring your manners. The cheapest rooms are very small.

To get to Attendorn by regional train requires changing in Hagen and in Finnentrop.

WINTERBERG

☎ 02981 / pop 14,500

Winterberg, the region's winter sports centre, is overlooked by the Kahler Asten, at 842m the Sauerland's highest mountain. Besides skiing, attractions include a 1600m-long bobsled run and an indoor skating rink. In good winters, the season runs from December to March, often helped along by snowmaking machines if nature fails to perform. In summer, there's lots of good hiking, including a popular and moderately strenuous 5km trail to the top of the Kahler Asten.

For more ideas, stop by the **tourist office** (☎ 925 00; www.winterberg.de; Am Kurpark 6).

Winterberg is served directly by trains from Dortmund every two hours.

SIEGERLAND

The hills and mountains of the Sauerland continue southward into the Siegerland region, with the city of Siegen as its focal point. Frankfurt, the Ruhrgebiet and Cologne are all about 100km away.

SIEGEN

☎ 0271 / pop 106,000

Wedged into a valley hemmed by dense forest, Siegen is the commercial hub of the Siegerland. For centuries it was ruled by the Counts of Nassau-Oranien, the family that ascended to the Dutch throne in 1813. Two palaces from those glory days survived the bombing squadrons of WWII, but in every other respect Siegen is a thoroughly modern city. The hilly Altstadt is the most scenic part of it, but its streets are increasingly quiet as two new giant shopping malls down by the Hauptbahnhof zap away the bulk of the business. Siegen was the birthplace of the painter Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640).

Orientation

Siegen's Altstadt slopes up from the Hauptbahnhof via pedestrianised Bahnhofstrasse and Kölner Strasse. If you're driving, the main artery through town is Koblenzer Strasse (B54/62).

Information

Banks with ATMs are right outside the Hauptbahnhof along Bahnhofstrasse.

Post office (Hindenburgstrasse 9)

Siegen tourist office (☎ 404 1316; www.tourismus-gss-siegen.de; Rathaus, Markt 2; ☒) 8am-4pm Mon & Tue, 8am-noon Wed & Fri, 8am-6pm Thu, 9am-noon Sat)

Siegerland tourist office (☎ 333 1020; Koblenzer Strasse 73; www.siegerland-wittgenstein-tourismus.de; ☒) 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri)

Sights

A hardened criminal arriving in prison might well gripe: 'This sure ain't no palace'. Well, in Siegen, it is. The **Unteres Schloss**, a mustard-coloured baroque palace, now houses the local jail along with other city-government offices. The elegant three-wing structure originally served as the residence of the Protestant princes of Nassau-Oranien, who had split off from the family's Catholic branch in 1623.

Right next to the prison wing, the **Museum für Gegenwartskunst** (Museum of Contemporary Art; ☎ 405 770; Unteres Schloss 1; adult/concession €3.90/2.60; ☒) 11am-6pm Tue, Wed & Fri-Sun, 11am-8pm Thu) occupies a 19th-century telegraph office with a modern annex. The permanent exhibit includes works by Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud and Cy Twombly, all of them recipients of the Rubenspreis (Rubens Prize) awarded by the city to an international artist every five years.

In the Markt you'll find the late Romanesque **Nikolaikirche** (☒) 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat May-Oct), which has a unique hexagonal floor plan but is otherwise quite plain on the inside. The golden, filigree crown atop the steeple is the city emblem. It was put there in 1652 to commemorate the local ruler's promotion from count to prince.

From Markt, Burgstrasse slopes up to the **Oberes Schloss**, a classic medieval fortress and the ancestral home of the rulers of Nassau-Oranien. Its labyrinth of rooms now houses the **Siegerlandmuseum** (☎ 230 400; Burgstrasse; adult/concession €2/1; ☒) 10am-5pm Tue-Sun), which would be a mediocre collection of old paintings were it not for its eight Rubens originals, including a self-portrait and a large-scale work viscerally depicting a lion hunt.

Sleeping

The local and the regional tourist offices can help with room reservations.

Berghotel Johanneshöhe (☎ 310 008; www.johanneshoehoe.de; Wallhausenstrasse 1; s €51-67, d €71-89; ☐) If you're motorised, this hilltop hotel will treat you to sweeping views (somewhat marred by the autobahn) and immaculate if rather stuffy quarters. The stiff-white-linen restaurant makes upscale German dishes (mains €11 to €23).

Park Hotel (☎ 338 10; www.bestwestern.de; Koblenzer Strasse 135; s/d €81/96; ☐ ☒) This modern 88-room property offers four-star amenities at three-star prices. Although it goes mostly after the business brigade, it offers such welcome leisure facilities as a sauna and steam room.

Eating

9Bar (☎ 313 9169; Markt 27; mains €6-8; ☒) 10am-midnight Mon-Sat, 2pm-midnight Sun) Pasta paired with classic and creative sauces is the main draw at this little urban bistro across from the Nikolaikirche. At night, it morphs into a bar-lounge.

Laternchen (☎ 231 8000; Lohrstrasse 37; mains €10-20; ☒) dinner Thu-Tue) For classic German cuisine, book a table at this elegantly rustic restaurant. It's in one of Siegen's few historic buildings with neat leaded-glass windows and slate-covered façade.

Piazza (☎ 303 0856; Unteres Schloss 1; lunch €6-11, dinner €12-22; ☒) 11am-11pm) Next to the Museum für Gegenwartskunst, this is a surprisingly urban restaurant with sleek décor, a terrace with teak furniture and a menu that mixes German and Mediterranean flavours and techniques.

Getting There & Away

Direct trains depart for Cologne hourly (€16.30, 1½ hours) and to Frankfurt (€21, 1¾ hours) every two hours. Change in Hagen for Dortmund (€22, two hours). Siegen is off the A45 connecting the Ruhrgebiet with Frankfurt and is also easily reached from Cologne via the A4.

AROUND SIEGEN Freudenberg

☎ 02734 / pop 18,600

About 12km north of Siegen, Freudenberg would be unremarkable without its amazing **Altstadt** (called 'Alter Flecken', meaning Old Borough), the 17th-century equivalent of a planned community. Built in tidy rows, these half-timbered houses all point in the same direction, are approximately the same height and sport the same white façades, the same pattern of wooden beams and the same black-slate roofs. Follow signs to *Historischer Stadtkern* (historic town centre). For panoramic views head to the Kurpark, best accessed from the intersection of Am Kurpark and Kölner Strasse.

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