

The German Mosaic

Kate Sommers-Daves explores the regions that comprise Germany for in-depth immersion programs

The language of Mozart and Einstein comes alive when studying in one of Germany's diverse regions. German is a global language — not only is it the most widely spoken first language in the European Union, but around the world, it is spoken by approximately 105 million native speakers, about 80 million non-native speakers, and is the third most studied language. In the U.S., German is the fifth most commonly spoken language at home after English, Spanish, Chinese, and French according to the 2000 U.S. Census.

The country's many cities have something to offer language travelers from all walks of life, be they amongst tiny Marburg's gothic churches or Berlin's contemporary art community. Freiburg, an historic 12th century city in Southwestern Germany, is surrounded by the Black Forest (*Schwarzwald*), which is home to rolling hills, mountain peaks, and the blue Danube. This is one of Germany's warmest regions, and also one of its most prolific wine growing areas. Freiburg is also an eco-friendly city; its council adopted a resolution in 1992 that allowed the construction of only "low-energy" buildings on municipal property using solar technologies and updated insulation practices. Near the city lie the Triberg Falls, some of the highest cascades in Germany and a popular natural tourist attraction.

Further north sits another ancient city on the River Main, once inhabited by Charlemagne and the Franks. Frankfurt is Germany's fifth largest city, known for its multiculturalism and its landmarks, including the 14th century Saint Bartholomeus' Cathedral, where Holy Roman Emperors were crowned for some two hundred years. The city's opera house, built in 1880, underwent reconstruction after it was damaged in WWII and is today a famed concert hall. Its inscription reads: *Dem Wahren, Schönen, Guten*, meaning "to the true, the beautiful, the good."

The German landscape varies dramatically, offering culturally diverse

urban centers, striking mountain summits, Baltic beaches, and historical architecture. Few methods of discovering such a country can surpass that of a language immersion course, which allows its participants to savor, and ultimately value, its many treasures at a more profound level than generally available to the casual visitor.

Six months ago, the **A-Z Deutsch** school was opened in Freiburg by three experienced teachers intent on creating a relaxed school with dynamic teaching. Students can start on any Monday and after classes, computer exercise programs are available for individual study along with flexible evening classes. Also on offer are a variety of activities such as guided city tours and evening get-togethers. The school offers German intensive courses at all levels and prepares students for exams like TestDaf and DSH, which must be passed before studying at a German university. Accommodation and tandem partners can be arranged.

Students who learn German in Berlin study in the heart of Europe, in a city of contrast and fusion: East meets West, history meets future, arts meet underground. As a European center of politics, culture, and arts, thousands of students are attracted to Berlin's unique cultural vibrancy, sizzling creativity and raw charm. **Freie Universität Berlin** is one of Germany's premier institutions of higher education, founded in 1948, with an enrollment of about 32,000 students. The university has a large percentage of foreign students and numerous partnerships with foreign universities. The university offers two ways to learn German, both in line with the American academic calendar. FUBiS offers intensive four to six week-long sessions in the summer or winter in which students can earn academic credits. Students in FU BEST, the Berlin



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European Studies Program, commit themselves to a full term or even a year at FU Berlin. Both programs offer intensive German language classes at various proficiency levels and subject classes in cultural studies, art history, comparative literature, the European Union, German history, German and European politics, sociology/psychology, film studies, comparative religion, and philosophy mostly taught in English by distinguished German and international faculty. During various field trips students explore the German capital, enjoy Berlin's rich museum landscape, monuments and memorials, concert halls and opera houses, stage and movie theaters, pubs and clubs, and range of recreational offerings. Students are offered a choice of housing options, including home stay.

The German Academic Triangle is made up of the **Universities of Dortmund, Bochum, and Duisburg-Essen** and is an alliance of innovative universities along the Ruhr river, called the **University Alliance Metropolis Ruhr**. The universities are currently selecting American university partners for the co-development of language and learning programs, focusing especially on dynamic programs for engineering, natural and social sciences students. Currently-offered programs include Dortmund's International Summer Program (ISP), which allows students from partner universities to learn German while taking experiential courses in applied engineering, mathematics, and

European business, Bochum's REACH program, where German lessons and global competency training are combined with hands-on summer research internships in Bochum's laboratories, and Duisburg-Essen's Automotive Summer program, focusing on courses in robotics and automation, combined with German culture and language classes.

Now that courses are widely offered in English, students without German language skills can take advantage of Germany's excellent reputation in fields such as engineering, business, and the sciences. The school's students want to can earn credits in their major while gaining insight into German culture and a head start at learning the language. At the Hessen: ISUs — **Hessen International Summer Universities** — a diverse group of students meet at universities in the scenic and lively state of Hessen to participate in four-week long summer sessions in fields as diverse as Bioethics and Law, European Integration, Environmental Engineering, and Music Therapy. The five locations in Frankfurt, Fulda, Giessen, Kassel, and Marburg represent the diversity of the state with a major financial capital, a Baroque city surrounded by rolling hills, and one of Germany's most charming university towns, complete with half-timber houses, winding rivers, and cobblestone streets once traversed by the Brothers Grimm. Language courses — at all levels — are mandatory at each of the Hessen:ISUs, but learning also comes naturally through day-to-day interactions with

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German students and people in the towns and cities where the courses are located. At the University of Kassel, students live with host families and are assigned German “tandem partners” to practice their growing language skills and programs include excursions which take advantage of Hessen’s own natural and cultural resources, as well as its location right in the center of Germany. Trips to wind farms for the groups working with renewable energy or the European Central Bank for the finance majors coexist alongside rafting, hiking, and, of course, exploring castles, museums, and cafes.

Munich is a safe and beautiful city filled with both old world tradition and all the vitality and culture of a big city with a small town atmosphere. In less than an hour on public transportation lie the Alps with their beautiful castles surrounded by rolling hills and glistening lakes. The **Ludwig-Maximilians-University** (LMU) is located in the heart of the city and is one of the leading research universities in Europe. Fifteen percent of its approximately 44,000 students come from abroad. During the summer months, LMU offers an extended program of German language courses and other Summer Academies through MISU — the Munich International Summer University. MISULMU participants enjoy an attractive program of extracurricular activities. The language courses on various levels are designed to teach German within its academic, cultural and social context, so that students deepen their

knowledge of Germany whilst simultaneously developing their language skills. Extracurricular activities include lectures, films and field trips to points of local and national cultural significance (Castle Neuschwanstein and the Dachau Concentration Camp, for example). Tutors also participate in these activities and are available for consultation. Affordable housing is arranged in LMU’s student dormitories (single rooms in shared apartments with high-speed internet access).

Language International is a leading global language travel agency with 12 language schools in Germany located all around the country, from the northern river-port city of Hamburg, to the political capital of Berlin, to the financial center, Frankfurt, to the Bavarian cities of Munich and Erlangen, to the smaller but equally exciting cities of Constance, Ellwangen, and Freudental for those looking for something off the beaten path. With the option to choose multiple locations in Germany, students can maximize their experience by seeing more of the country while improving their language skills. Language International has a team of German-speaking student advisors who have all studied in Germany and know the country intimately. **IX**

Kate Sommers-Dawes is assistant editor for *Language Magazine* and a passionate *experte* on German vintners.



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