

Hamburg

Overview

Hamburg lies on the Elbe River and is Germany's second largest city, with a population in the region of 1.7 million people.

The city has an interesting history and has been a major port and trading centre in central Europe for centuries. Much of Hamburg was destroyed in 1842, when a great fire swept through the city, and then again during the Second World War when allied bombing raids devastated large areas. However, its strategic position for trade has ensured the city's survival and today Hamburg is a thriving modern metropolis. It is also Germany's greenest city boasting a large number of parks, nature reserves and protected countryside, which together make up a large percentage of the city's total area.

Hamburg is also one of Germany's most popular tourist destinations, attracting thousands of visitors every day for both business and pleasure. The city is home to numerous cultural and other attractions such as museums and theatres, a modern opera house, zoo, a botanical garden, not to mention the hundreds of beer halls, restaurants and nightclubs.

Situated on the Trave river in Northern Germany, Lübeck has a population in excess of 200,000 people and is an historic city that first became a fortified settlement in the 12th century. By the 13th century it had become an important centre for trade and was the capital of the Hanseatic League, the association of merchants that controlled trade along the Baltic.

The city boasts some stunning architecture with magnificent Gothic buildings dating from the medieval period, many of which have undergone extensive restoration after having suffered heavy bombing during the Second World War. Over a thousand of the city's buildings are protected and, in 1987, most of the Old Town was declared a world Heritage Site. The city's skyline is characterised by its numerous church towers including those of the Cathedral in the south; St. Marien, which in the 14th century was the largest church in Christendom; St. Petri, the only five-apsed hall church in Northern Germany; St. Jakobi in the north; and the Church of St. Aegidien in the east, located in the so-called craftsmen's quarter. In the Middle Ages the city also had four monasteries the first of which, St. Johannis, was established in 1173 near the Wakenitz by the Benedictines. St. Katharinen was established by the Franciscans in 1225 then, in 1227, came the Mary Magdalene Dominican monastery on the site of the former castle. Lastly, shortly before the Reformation, St.-Annen-Kloster was built.

The magic of the city itself is best appreciated by taking a walk through the Old Town. Some of the most prominent landmarks include the Town Hall, the construction of which was begun in 1250, the Romanesque Cathedral and the Holstentor, a remaining part of the city's old defenses with two large towers.

Considered by many to be the cultural centre of northern Germany, Lübeck is not short of interesting attractions and events which will delight and entertain. It is home to numerous festivals, theatres, museums and has thriving art and music scenes. In addition, the city has Germany's largest port on the Baltic and has a stable economy with a strong industrial sector and growing service sector.

Notable citizens of the city include the former West German chancellor and Nobel Peace Prize winner, Willy Brandt and Thomas Mann, winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1929.