

# Diary of my Travels through Germany



## Hamburg – Schleswig-Holstein – Lower Saxony

### 1. Hamburg – *Landungsbrücken* (Landing Piers)

Arrived at Hamburg airport, this morning. My youth hostel is located next to the *Landungsbrücken* at the harbor. They were the last impression of the city that 5 million emigrants got before they left Germany for the United States in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



### 2. Hamburg – *Rathaus* (City Hall)

Hamburg's city hall gives a good impression of the enormous wealth of Germany's second-largest city. The building is constructed upon about 4000 piles, because the swampy underground couldn't carry its weight at first.



### 3. Hamburg – *Fischmarkt* (Fish Market)

I had to get up at 5 o'clock this morning to go to the famous *Fischmarkt*. Every Sunday between 5 and 9:30 a.m., people come here to buy fish and groceries, and also to enjoy the atmosphere, have a beer and a fish sandwich for breakfast and listen to local Jazz bands.



### 4. Hamburg – Harbor Workers

Later that day, I took a harbor tour. Hamburg likes to call itself "Gateway to the World" and has been an important harbor since 800 A.D. Today, approximately 11,000 ships come and go here every year. They bring grain, cotton, oil, ore and other goods and take away industrial goods such as machinery and automobiles. The harbor is Hamburg's largest employer: 140,000 people work here.



## Hamburg – Schleswig-Holstein – Lower Saxony

### 5. Hamburg – *Reeperbahn* Nightlife

The *Reeperbahn* is Hamburg's world famous entertainment district. Countless neon-signs try to attract people to visit musicals, theaters and discos.



### 6. Hamburg – *Kunsthalle* (Art Gallery)

The Hamburg *Kunsthalle* is really exciting because of the combination of its art deco and its very simple and modern buildings. The modern art objects by Joseph Beuys and Jeff Koons were awesome!



### 7. Hamburg – Airbus Factory

In the largest factory of passenger airplanes, I felt like an ant between elephants in a huge fictional bell jar.



### 8. North Sea – Dike; Railway connection to the island of Sylt

I left Hamburg this morning and headed north to the island of Sylt in the North Sea. The train is going through the flat plains of Schleswig-Holstein, which are dotted by huge bright white wind wheels.

**Hamburg – Schleswig-Holstein – Lower Saxony****9. North Sea – House on the island of Amrum**

Today, I was invited to a typical home with a straw roof.

**10. North Sea – Mill on the Island of Amrum**

Mills are typical landmarks in the coastal region of Germany. I was lucky to have the chance to visit one still in use. I even bought flour for my mother who is fond of organic products.

**11. North Sea – Lighthouse in Westerhever**

Surprising in this landscape are the strong red and white lighthouses that stick out from the blue and green plains.

**12. North Sea – mudflats (Padingbüttel)**

At low tide I hiked across the mudflats. I was afraid that I might lose track and not find my way back home before the flood returns.



## Hamburg – Schleswig-Holstein – Lower Saxony

### 13. Lüneburg Heath (Lower Saxony)

An atmosphere of purple-colored plains with stark oaks, birches and juniper trees, impenetrated by an aromatic smell of evergreen!



### 14. Celle (Lower Saxony) – Half-timbered Houses

How much I love to walk through the picturesque lanes with houses and doors that seem to be taken out of a doll-house.



## North-Rhine Westphalia – Cologne, Bonn

### 1. Cologne – View of the City

It's hard to imagine that this large city, which lies directly by the Rhine River, is more than 2,000 years old! Although great parts of the city were destroyed during World War II – like a miracle – the huge *Kölner Dom* (Cologne Cathedral) wasn't damaged seriously.



### 2. Cologne – South portal of the *Kölner Dom* (Cologne Cathedral)

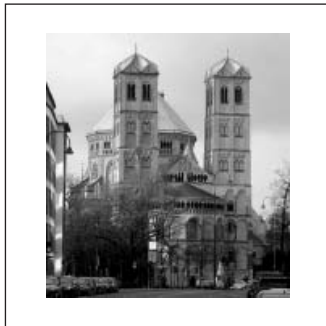
I'm overwhelmed by the size of this largest gothic building in Germany. It was built over a period of 600 years and was only finished in 1880. In the interior, I admire the wonderful golden shrine of the three Magi whose mortal remains were brought here from Milan in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.



**North-Rhine Westphalia – Cologne, Bonn**

**3. Cologne – Church spires of the *Kölner Dom***

I walked up the 509 steps of one of the towers and enjoyed an amazing view! When I looked at all the spires I could well imagine the enormous size and art-work of the cathedral.



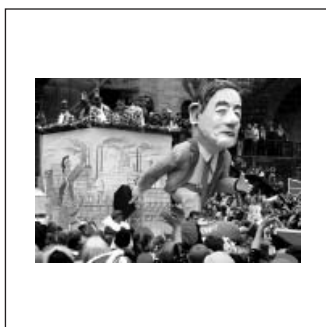
**4. Cologne – Roman church of *St. Gereon***

Not far from the Cathedral, I pass another most impressive church. The dome of this massive romanic church is the third-largest in the world after the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul and the Dome in Florence!



**5. Cologne – *Fischmarkt* (Fish market)**

I so much enjoy taking a break on one of the many old squares in the historic center, meet people and have a cold Apfelschorle, a mixture of carbonated water and apple juice.



**6. Cologne – *Kölner Karneval* (Cologne carnival)**

The people of Cologne definitely know how to party! The *Karneval*, or so-called 5<sup>th</sup> season, is celebrated with an amazing parade on Rose Monday with endless huge decorated cars, colorfully costumed people and lots of candy, and is the craziest festival I have ever seen! It's almost like Mardi Gras in New Orleans! I never expected Germans to act like this.



## North-Rhine Westphalia – Cologne, Bonn

### 7. Cologne – Promenade along the Rhine River

The next morning, it's good to exercise and walk along this wonderful broad river.



### 8. Cologne – *Altes Rathaus* (Old City Hall) with *Mikwe*

I nearly laughed my head off when I saw this funny wooden carved face, the *Platz-Jabbeck* above the balcony of the old city hall. At every full hour, it opens its mouth and sticks out its tongue. Underneath the transparent pyramid, I saw the really fascinating excavations of a medieval Jewish ritual bath, the *Mikwe*, from the 12<sup>th</sup> century.



### 9. Bonn – Old residence (university main building)

Bonn must be just the perfect place to study! The university's main building is located in a noble-looking former residential palace from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Like some other students, I relax on the lawn in front of the university and watch some students play soccer.



### 10. Bonn – Beethoven's birth place

What a cute old house, so full of nooks and crannies! Here, the great composer Ludwig van Beethoven was born in 1770. When I read that he gave his first public concert at the age of 7, I remember that I was hardly able to play my flute at that age.



## North-Rhine Westphalia – Cologne, Bonn

### 11. Bonn – former government buildings and art museums

What a great view! Stylish buildings crowned by a rooftop garden!



### 12. Bonn – Bad Godesberg – Godesburg

Like a candle, the medieval Godesburg fortress overlooks the Rhine River valley.



## Bavaria

### 1. Augsburg: Fuggerei District

In these peaceful lanes with low orange colored houses I feel transported into the 16<sup>th</sup> century when Jakob Fugger the Rich and his brothers built this first social settlement in the world for impoverished citizens.



### 2. Munich: City view

Churches, churches and churches – and in the background mountains – that's Munich!  
Is there more to it?

**Bavaria****3. Munich: Neues Rathaus (New City Hall)**

Yes, there is! Definitely! The large Glockenspiel attracts crowds of visitors at 11 a.m.

A clock with a carillon in remembrance of a medieval tournament and a dance which terminated the Black Plague in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

**4. Munich: Alter Hof (Old Court)**

The guide told me that this is one of the rare renaissance buildings that survived repeated medieval city fires which destroyed the whole city.

**5. Munich: Olympia-Stadion (Olympic Stadium)**

What a beautiful day! The grandiloquent transparent tent roof glitters in the sunlight.

**6. Munich: Biergarten (beer garden)**

I cannot leave Munich without having visited a *Biergarten*. Pretzels, spare ribs and *Weißwurst* (white sausages) are the Bavarian specialities I tried.



**Bavaria****7. Munich: *Deutsches Museum* (German Museum)**

I could spend another 3 weeks in this building and not get through all the halls of this enormous museum of technology. My absolute favorite is the hall that gives an overview from the first observations made in nature to the development of aviation.

**8. Munich: *Oktoberfest***

Unbelievable! This world's largest folk festival with thousands of visitors from all over the globe crowding in tents, drinking beer and eating might end with dances on top of the tables or with a nap underneath them.

**9. Munich: *Isar surfing***

I thought that I couldn't trust my eyes, but people go surfing on the Isar River so close to the center of Munich!

**10. *Oberammergau***

I was lucky to find a typical picturesque hotel in the Bavarian Alps. It is decorated with wonderful red and pink geraniums.



## Bavaria

### 11. *Wieskirche*

This church was declared a World heritage site by the UNESCO, because of the fascinating rococo treasures in its interior. It seems to stand on a green hill, in the middle of nowhere.



### 12. *Linderhof Chateau*

After driving through the wood and mountains for hours, suddenly there appears a fairy tale chateau. Pompously furnished by the romantic and art-loving king Ludwig II.



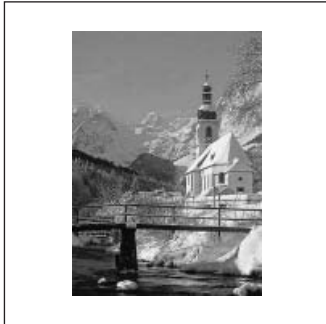
### 13. *Neuschwanstein*

I feel so enchanted by the view of Neuschwanstein, the real castle of Sleeping Beauty, where Ludwig II. once dreamed of a better world.



### 14. *Faulensee (Lazy Lake)*

It was time for me to go for a refreshing swim in the *Faulensee*, which is close to Neuschwanstein. Without all the tourists swarming around, I enjoy the beautiful view of the snowy peaks of the Alps.



**Bavaria**

**15. Austria: Ramsau**

Welcome to the winter wonderland! I so much enjoyed this little town just by the Austrian border, which is like some magic place in a fairy tale. I definitely would like to come back and experience it in wintertime as seen on this picture post-card.



**Saxony**

**1. Dresden – Way into city center**

It is hard to believe that Dresden was heavily bombed at the end of World War II, as its beautiful palaces and squares of the 18<sup>th</sup> century have just been reconstructed. I have the impression that this city by the Elbe river could be a serious touristic rival to Munich in the near future.



**2. Dresden – View of the city with *Frauenkirche* (Church of Our Lady)**

Like phoenix out of the ashes, this church was raised from a pile of stones thanks to generous donations from all over the world.



**3. Dresden – *Semper Oper* (Semper Opera)**

Unfortunately I was not allowed to take pictures of the interior with its wonderful bright frescos and murals, and royal balconies.



## Saxony

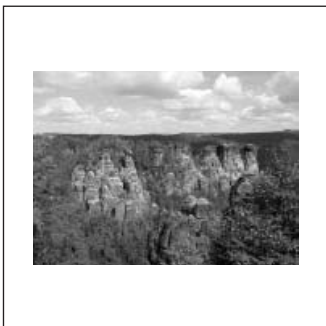
### **4. Dresden – Pfund's Molkerei (Pfund's Dairy Store)**

The land of milk and honey – especially for friends of cheese! In the world's first dairy store, delicacies are sold between walls of beautifully painted tiles with historic scenes and traditional Saxonian ornaments.



### **5. Moritzburg**

I tried to imagine the feasts that must have taken place in this truly romantic, baroque castle, which is built on an island in a pond and is surrounded by endless parks.



### **6. Sächsische Schweiz – Natural Park Elbsandsteingebirge**

A lunar landscape that fell out of space right into the Saxonian forest! I have to go rock climbing this afternoon.



### **7. Erzgebirge (Ore mountains) – Taubenheim**

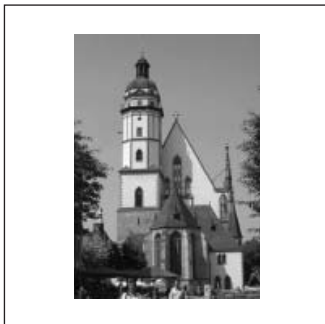
This dreamy little village consists just of an almost spooky old manor house and a few farms.

**Saxony****8. Meissen**

The tiny figures of Meissen porcelain are extremely expensive. I would have liked to buy at least one figure as a souvenir – no chance!

**9. Leipzig – View of the city**

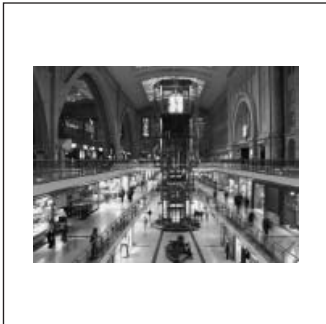
Here it is obvious that this city was totally destroyed in World War II and rebuilt under Stalinist influence. Fortunately, there are some idyllic corners left undemolished...

**10. Leipzig – Thomaskirche (Thomas Church)**

...for instance this church with the famous *Thomas* Choir, which I truly enjoyed! Even today, only boys with exceptional voices are allowed to sing in this choir.

**11. Leipzig – City Hall and Market Place**

Leipzig's market place with its old city hall incorporate amazing renaissance architecture dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The shopping archades have a very special, almost Mediterranean touch.



## Saxony

### 12. Shopping mall at Main Station

German shops are so different from American ones. I loved to go window shopping in the immense modern mall of Leipzig's main station. Now, I have to catch a train to my next destination – Berlin.



## Berlin

### 1. City view with Gedächtniskirche and Television Tower at Alexanderplatz

The capital has so much to offer and I'm astonished to hear that people are said to either love or hate Berlin – I fell in love with it from the first moment on.



### 2. Brandenburger Tor (Brandenburg Gate) in 1989 with wall

This picture was taken on one of the most important days in the history of Berlin after World War II. In the night of the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> of November 1989, the government of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) decided to open its borders with the Federal Republic of Germany after 40 years of separation. During that night and the following day thousands of people from the eastern and western parts of Berlin danced on the wall which divided Berlin and celebrated for days.



### 3. Brandenburger Tor today

Today, busses and cabs pass through the Brandenburg gate to commute between the western and eastern parts of the city and tourists take pictures of the newly renovated Brandenburg Gate and its splendid surroundings.



**Berlin**

**4. East Side Gallery**

The East Side Gallery is an open air gallery consisting of remains of the wall that divided Berlin once into East and West. It exhibits murals by amateur and professional artists.



**5. Sony Center at Potsdamer Platz (Potsdam Square)**

I dive into the science fiction world of the Sony Center and other modern glass towers at *Potsdamer Platz* and take in the atmosphere of this huge new business and entertainment district.



**6. Street cafe at Friedrichshain**

Only a subway ride away: *Friedrichshain*. Students from Berlin's three large universities hang out in the numerous street cafés. After a *Latte Macchiato*, I check out some small shops with old records and self-designed clothes.



**7. Hackesche Höfe Yards**

These 8 yards are like an oasis in the pulsating city with their beautiful art nouveau architecture. I love this small old theatre and the little boutiques. If for one place in Berlin, I would chose to live here. I'm happy to find a bike rental in there, so that I won't have to walk all the way to the Jewish Museum.

## Berlin



### 8. Jewish Museum

Apart from the really impressive architecture by Daniel Libeskind, the museum gives an overview of 2000 years of Jewish history in Germany! The strong contrast between the earlier assimilation of Jews in German culture and the following break with the Holocaust left me extremely upset.



### 9. KaDeWe – Department Store

I have lunch in the famous food department on the top floor of the *Kaufhaus des Westens*, and it looks like the best thing that has ever happened to me. They seem to have the best of everything, from shrimp to cheese, chocolate, coffee, or real Champagne.



### 10. Kurfürstendamm

After the unification, most grand luxury stores moved from here to the restored Friedrichstraße in the eastern part of Berlin, but lately some have moved back to their original destination – *Kudamm*.



### 11. Love Parade at Siegessäule (Victory Column)

What a weird clash of classicistic and modern times. The *Siegessäule* is surrounded by crowds of ravers in crazy clothes who dance wildly to techno and other beats. Here is the final meeting point for the legendary Love Parade, a huge music event for fans of rave and techno music from all over the world that usually takes place every year in July.





## Berlin

### 12. *Reichstag* Building

For the Germans, the *Reichstag* building symbolizes the uprise of parliament in empirial Germany, the darkness of the Nazi period, and today, its democratic system.



### 13. *Wannsee* (Wannsee Lake)

I spent all Sunday on Wannsee Beach on the borders of Berlin and had a swim in one of the largest of the many lakes in the area. It felt as if I was actually chilling by a seashore.



## Mecklenburg – Western Pomerania

### 1. *Mecklenburgische Seenplatte* (Mecklenburg Lake District)

From the crowded city of Berlin, I travel further north to the quiet Mecklenburg Lake District. Here, I take a boat tour on one of the thousand lakes.



### 2. Rural estate in Mecklenburg – Western Pomerania

These small villages with old manors and castles are the essence of German rural life.



## Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania

### 3. Greifswald

The amount of medieval cities like *Greifswald* with old universities and libraries in this country is amazing.



### 4. Island of Rügen – Chalk Cliffs

Only a stone's throw and I reach the island of Rügen in the Baltic Sea. The strong colors of the white chalk cliffs, green forests and the blue sea remind me of my last tour through the southeast of Great Britain.



### 5. Island of Rügen – Beach with Pier

Obviously one of the remnants of older touristic attractions is the pier on the beach of Sellin which is, as I'm informed, a reconstruction of the historical model.



### 6. Lighthouse

It is like concluding a circle. I started my tour with a lighthouse in Schleswig-Holstein and end it with one in Mecklenburg – Western Pomerania. The yellow canola fields are almost as bright yellow as the sunflower fields painted by van Gogh. The canola is used to produce oil.



## Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania

### 7. Wismar

Here is another medieval variation of red bricks and blue water.



### 8. Schwerin

The Schwerin palace is the last highlight of my roundtrip through Germany. The state government sits next to the impressive ducal throne room and the gallery of ancestral portraits. I will never forget the wonderful park that surrounds the palace.

Now, all I have to do is to decide in which of the cities or regions I visited I would like to spend my year studying abroad. Is it in Hamburg with its exciting harbor, in the relaxed atmosphere of Bonn? In the never boring metropolis of Berlin? Or in one of the oldest European universities like the one in Greifswald? Please help me decide by discussing the advantages of the different places. What are some special traits of the different regions? Do you think that you could compare them to different regions in the U.S.? If Yes, which regions would you compare, and why?