

German diversity

Germany's eclectic history has left a legacy of diverse historical sites, festivals and customs for language travel students to discover, as GILLIAN POOLE reports.

Germany was made up of several independent states right up until the 19th century when they were eventually absorbed into Prussia. It was then sliced in two after the Second World War and reunited at the end of the 1980s. Today, the results of the country's fragmented past are clearly evident with each of Germany's 16 states offering language travellers a very different experience.

Restored as the capital city of the reunified Germany nine years ago, Berlin is where the past meets the present. "Students are interested in Berlin as a rapidly changing and booming city on the former border between East and West [Germany]," says Dorothee

Robrecht from GLS Sprachenzentrum, which is situated in Berlin's lively multicultural district of Schoenberg. "At the moment, Berlin really is a boom town, with



new bars and galleries opening up every week [and] Internet and media companies moving here." Berlin is also a city that knows how to enjoy itself. "It has a great nightlife," confirms Robrecht. "You can go out 24 hours a day."

There are plenty of festivals in Berlin too, one of the most modern being the Love Parade, a "big open air techno disco which attracts up to one million visitors every year". Robrecht also highlights the traditional *Lange Nacht der Museen* (Long Night of Museums), when the museums in Berlin are open throughout the night. "The museums are really crowded with people all night, and sometimes the buses commuting between them are so full you'd better take your bike or just walk," she says.

In order to ensure students mix with Berliners, GLS offers them the chance to share an apartment with Germans, as well as host family accommodation, and at its junior



language camp, both German and overseas students attend. "The Germans learn English in the morning [and] the foreign students learn German but, in the afternoons after class, everybody joins the activity and social programme," explains Robrecht.

South of Berlin are historic cities such as Dresden, with its attractive baroque Zwinger palace complex which is now home a number of museums; Weimar, whose legacy as an international arts centre in the 19th century is still evident today; and Leip-

Agent viewpoint



"Unfortunately demand for German among my clients is decreasing. In the last three years the number of students taking German has remained the same. This may be owing to the downturn in the economy. In Japanese universities, English must be taken and another language can be taken. Traditionally, most students take German as their second foreign language. The most popular locations for my clients are Munich and Bremen, where they can experience the old atmosphere

and where it is not dangerous. But the numbers going to Bielefeld are also growing. Students like the climate in summer, the nature and safety. Highlights include going to Salzburg, Cologne and Schloss Neuschwanstein."

Fumie Nuguchi, Euro Forum, Japan



"A lot of [our] clients study German for business purposes, but there are also others, who just like to learn new languages. There are also students who

need to do an exam in [Switzerland] and they will get some more experience and book a language course. We [offer schools in] Berlin and Munich, and these are the best locations for us and our clients. There is not much demand for other places. Students like the kind and friendly people in Germany and the nice country with a lot of sightseeing possibilities. The quality of the language schools in Germany is quite high - which our clients expect. There are a lot of things [for students] to do in their free time after school, like