



Frankfurt & Southern Rhineland

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Best Places to Eat

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- ➔ Weinhotel Landsknecht (p439)
- ➔ Zu den 12 Aposteln (p387)

Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Kloster Machern (p453)
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- ➔ Baker Street (p460)

Why Go?

In this enchanting corner of Germany, the finer things in life take pride of place: good food, great wine, glorious walking and cycling, and exceptional art everywhere, from magnificent museums to quirky street sculptures.

Vineyards ribbon the steep-sided Romantic Rhine and Moselle Valleys, as well as the wisteria-draped German Wine Route, the country's warmest region. All three areas are strewn with hilltop castles, dark forests, and scores of snug wineries for sampling exquisite crisp whites.

History abounds here, from the preserved Roman amphitheatre and thermae in Germany's oldest city, Trier, to crooked half-timbered medieval villages, spectacular palaces, centres of learning like the ancient university city of Heidelberg and Goethe's birthplace, the finance and trade-fair hub of Frankfurt, and momentous industrial and engineering legacies such as the invention of the printing press in Mainz and the bicycle and automobile in Mannheim that continue to influence the world today.

When to Go

Frankfurt's attractions can be enjoyed at any time of the year, but you'll pay a fortune for accommodation if your visit coincides with a big trade fair. Nearby towns can provide a cheaper base, but you should still book *well* ahead.

The Moselle and the Rhine Valleys teem with visitors from May to August but are very quiet from November to March, although towns with Christmas markets are lively in December.

Along the German Wine Route, village wine festivals are held on weekends from March to mid-November.

FRANKFURT AM MAIN

📍 069 / POP 709,395

Glinting with glass, steel and concrete skyscrapers, Frankfurt-on-the-Main (pronounced 'mine') is unlike any other German city. The focal point of a conurbation of 5.5 million inhabitants, 'Mainhattan' is a high-powered finance and business hub, home to one of the world's largest stock exchanges as well as the gleaming new headquarters of the European Central Bank. Frankfurt famously hosts some of the world's most important trade fairs, attracting thousands of business travellers. Its airport, the region's biggest employer, is the third-largest in Europe, handling over 57 million passengers per year.

Yet at its heart, Frankfurt is an unexpectedly traditional and charming city, with half-timbered buildings huddled in its quaint medieval Altstadt (old city), cosy apple wine taverns serving hearty regional food, village-like neighbourhoods filled with outdoor cafes, boutiques and street art, and beautiful parks, gardens and riverside paths. The city's cache of museums is second in Germany only to Berlin's, and its nightlife and entertainment scenes are bolstered by a spirited student population.

History

Around 2000 years ago Frankfurt was a site of Celtic and Germanic settlement and then, in the area known today as the Römerberg, a Roman garrison town.

Mentioned in historical documents as far back as AD 794, Frankfurt was an important centre of power in the Holy Roman Empire. With the election of Frederick I (Barbarossa) in 1152, the city became the customary site of the selection of German kings. International trade fairs – attracting business from the Mediterranean to the Baltic – were held here, beginning in the 12th century.

In 1372 Frankfurt became a 'free imperial city', a status it enjoyed almost uninterrupted until the Prussian takeover of 1866. A stock exchange began operating in Frankfurt in 1585, and it was here that the Rothschild banking family began its ascent in the 1760s.

Frankfurt has a strong Jewish history – in 1933, its 30,000-strong Jewish community, was Germany's second largest. Around town, you may see brass squares the size of a cobblestone embedded in the pavement. These *Stolpersteine* ('stumbling blocks') serve as memorials to Jews deported by the Nazis by marking their last place of residence.

About 80% of Frankfurt's medieval city centre was destroyed – and over 1000 people were killed – by Allied bombing raids in March 1944. The area around Römerberg has since been reconstructed.

Today, Frankfurt is a thriving, contemporary city still focused on trade fairs and finance.

👁 Sights & Activities

Most of Frankfurt's museums are closed on Monday; exceptions include the Goethe-Haus, Senckenberg Museum and Explora.

👁 Altstadt

The city's historic core centres on the Dom and the lively, tourist-mobbed Römerberg, a medieval public square ringed by reconstructed half-timbered buildings.

★ Kaiserdom

CATHEDRAL

(Imperial/Frankfurt Cathedral; Map p376; www.dom-frankfurt.de; tower adult/concession €3.50/1.50; ☺ church 8am-8pm Mon-Thu, noon-8pm Fri, 9am-8pm Sat & Sun, tower 9am-6pm Apr-Oct, 11am-5pm Thu-Mon Nov-Mar; 📍 Dom/Römer) Frankfurt's red-sandstone cathedral is dominated by a 95m-high Gothic tower, which can be climbed via 324 steps. Construction began in the 13th century; from 1356 to 1792, the Holy Roman Emperors were elected (and, after 1562, consecrated and crowned) in the **Wahkapelle** at the end of the right aisle (look for the 'skull' altar). The cathedral was rebuilt both after an 1867 fire and after the bombings of 1944, which left it a burnt-out shell.

It's dedicated to the apostle St Bartholomew, hence its official name, Kaiserdom St Bartholomäus.

To the left as you enter the cathedral, the **Dommuseum** (Cathedral Museum; Map p376; www.dommuseum-frankfurt.de; museum adult/student €3/2, cathedral tours adult/student €4/2; ☺ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat, Sun & holidays, cathedral tours 3pm Tue-Sun except during weddings) has a small collection of precious liturgical objects and sells tickets for Dom tours (in German).

Frequent **concerts**, including organ recitals, take place here; schedules are listed on the Dom's website.

★ Römerberg

SQUARE

(Map p376; 📍 Dom/Römer) The Römerberg is Frankfurt's old central square. Ornately gabled half-timbered buildings, reconstructed