

Press-Information

Frankfurt – A City of Contrasts

Frankfurt am Main, the metropolis at the heart of Europe, is defined by stimulating contrasts of tradition and modernity, trade and culture, business and tranquility. The famous international trade fairs held here, the financial business conducted, the city's cultural scene and its accessible location all contribute to Frankfurt's metropolitan reputation.

Frankfurt's famed skyline features more skyscrapers than any other German city. Its formation and rapid expansion is largely due to the presence of many national and international banks which, alongside the stock exchange, the head office of the German Federal Bank and the European Central Bank, have turned the city into Germany's premier financial centre. Furthermore, Frankfurt is the leading service sector location, as evidenced by the Commerzbank skyscraper which, at 259 metres (not counting the 40-metre antenna) is Europe's tallest office high-rise. Frankfurt's skyline is ever-changing – the newest skyscrapers are already under construction and many more are in the design stages. One of the most notable attractions is the Main Tower, built by the Hamburg company Schweger and Partner and one of the first skyscrapers open to the general public. The Main Tower offers a restaurant on the 53rd floor and a spectacular and panoramic observation platform on the 55th floor - 200 metres above Frankfurt. Frankfurt's urban development plan promises the completion of two new and spectacular high-rise projects in the coming years. The first of the two, a 150-metre-tall structure, will be the new home of the European Central Bank, while the second high-rise, bearing the name "PalaisQuartier" is at present under construction. It's shopping mall with relaxation and activity venue has opened in 2009 and in 2010 the opening of a luxury hotel and office building will complete this project.

When Frankfurt was born, none of these developments were even hinted at. The former Roman city "Nida", later part of the Carolingian Palatinate, emerged from the depths of history on the 22nd of February 794, to be mentioned in official documents as *Frankfurt*. The occasion was a convention of great significance for the whole of Europe - a German Empire synod held by Charlemagne. The city

was named *francono furd* after its geographical location, being situated near a natural ford close to where the *Main* river meets the *Rhine* - right at the heart of the Franconian Empire.

Although never a bishop seat, Frankfurt's *Dom*, or cathedral, was the place where German kings were chosen from 1356 onwards; German Emperors were also crowned there some 200 years later. The banquets that followed were held in the imperial hall or *Römer*, a building complex consisting of three half-timbered merchant houses. In 1405, the city purchased the complex and converted it to the town hall. Ever since, the three-gabled silhouette of the building has been the symbol of the city. Even today, Frankfurt's city council - an elected municipal parliament - holds its meetings here. As far back as the Middle Ages, fairs and markets took place inside the town hall's *Römerhallen* and on the *Römerberg* outside. Today, the *Römerberg* is in the heart of the old town centre and a popular tourist destination. And the *Römerhallen* are still in demand as a venue for a large variety of events.

Not far from the *Römer* is the *St. Paul's Church*, where the first German National Assembly was held in 1848. Since then, the church has been known as the cradle of German democracy.

Due mainly to the 13 museums located on both sides of the *Main*, Frankfurt has developed a reputation as a significant cultural centre. The *museum embankment* represents a unique synthesis of renowned exhibition culture and far-sighted city planning. Several 19th century buildings worthy of preservation were gutted and given a new lease of life; their exteriors are still a characteristic feature of the riverbank. Many of the newer buildings and extensions are true architectural gems, designed by internationally renowned architects. The *Museum of Modern Art*, designed by Viennese architect Hans Hollein, is one such gem, the building being shaped like a slice of cake. Other highlights from Frankfurt's range of museums are the *German Architecture Museum* and the *Museum of Communication*. With its healthy budget for cultural events - unusually high for German local authorities - the city has been able to fund not only opera, ballet and theatre productions, but also numerous private theatres. Another symbol of Frankfurt's commitment to culture is the *Concert and Congress Centre Alte Oper Frankfurt*, rebuilt after the Second World War to return it to its original Italian Renaissance style. The university, founded in 1914,

carries the name of Frankfurt's most famous son, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. He was born in Frankfurt on the 28th of August 1749, spending the early part of his life here. His birthplace is one of Frankfurt's most popular tourist attractions, and also includes the *Goethe Museum*.

As the home of continental Europe's largest airport (renamed Fraport AG after listing on the stock exchange in 2001), biggest passenger train station and a major overland traffic hub, Frankfurt is easily reached from within Germany and further afield. As organisers and participants at international congresses are pleased to confirm, more tourists and business travellers from other countries visit Frankfurt than any other German city.

Thanks to its favourable traffic connections, Frankfurt is one of Europe's oldest trading centres north of the Alps. The first trade fairs are known to have taken place here as early as the 11th century. Today, 10 centuries later, Frankfurt is one of the world's most significant trade fair locations. Kaiser Friedrich II declared it the world's first trade fair city by way of imperial privilege in 1240. Messe Frankfurt, the city's trade fair organisation, can therefore trace 750 years of history and tradition. These days, the expo grounds west of the city provide the enormous national and international trade fairs held in Frankfurt with 475,000 sq/m of exhibition space in ten large halls. The best-known and most popular fairs are the *Frankfurt Book Fair* and the *International Automotive Exhibition (IAA)*.

As the seat of the European Central Bank, Frankfurt's claim to the status of a leading financial centre is strengthened by the fact that 229 of the 332 banks represented here (194 of these being foreign banks) have chosen to have their headquarters in the Main metropolis. Although the number of foreign banks has decreased noticeably over the last few years, this can mostly be attributed to mergers.

Frankfurt is also Germany's advertising capital. Its creative thinkers come up with a sizeable chunk of the advertising slogans that entice us every day. Around 1,000 advertising and communications businesses responsible for product marketing and image development are based in Frankfurt.

In contrast to the busy inner-city life and its internationally renowned shopping opportunities, the rural-style suburbs with their romantic half-timbered houses offer an idyllic village atmosphere that typifies German *Gemütlichkeit*, or cosiness. After a day's shopping in Frankfurt, an enjoyable evening can be had in a traditional *apple wine pub* in the Sachsenhausen district, or maybe at one of the countless jazz and live music venues. During summer, the popular street festivals come highly recommended. In the winter, a stroll across the traditional Christmas market on the *Römerberg* is not to be missed. A highlight on Frankfurt's annual events calendar is the *Museum Embankment Festival* held in August – a spectacle of top-flight arts and culture.

Frankfurt is also an ideal base for day trips: the mountainous forest landscapes of the Taunus, Spessart and Odenwald regions are easily reached by car, public transport and even boat. The romantic Rheingau area, with its picturesque castles and vineyards, and famous cities like Heidelberg, Wiesbaden and Mainz, are also ideal destinations for relaxing holiday jaunts.

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