

Germany

By Tom Kirvan

A LAND OF BEAUTY, HISTORICAL LANDMARKS, AND CULTURAL CONTRASTS

Germany, a country at the heart of Europe, boasts a population of more than 83 million people, and is known for its contributions to art, science, and philosophy, as well as its scenic landscapes that range from the Alps to the Baltic Sea.

The most populous country in the European Union, Germany covers an area of 138,000 square miles, roughly the geographic size of Montana. It is bordered by nine countries: Denmark, Poland, Czech Republic, Austria, Switzerland, France, Luxembourg, Belgium, and the Netherlands. The country's geography is diverse, featuring northern coastal plains, central highlands, and the Bavarian Alps in the south.

The capital city of Berlin blends history with modernity. With a population of around 3.7 million, Berlin is a hub of political, cultural, and economic activity. The city is renowned for its vibrant arts scene, striking architecture, and poignant history. Visitors can explore the remnants of the Berlin Wall, visit the iconic Brandenburg Gate, and immerse themselves in the world-class museums on Museum Island. Dynamic neighborhoods, like Kreuzberg and Prenzlauer Berg, offer a taste of Berlin's eclectic lifestyle.

Zugspitze, standing at 9,718 feet, is Germany's highest peak. In German, it is known as "avalanche path peak." Located in the Bavarian Alps near the Austrian border, Zugspitze offers breathtaking views and a variety of outdoor activities. Visitors can take a cable car to the summit, enjoy skiing and snowboarding in the winter, or hike the scenic trails in the summer. The panoramic views from the top span across Germany and Austria, making it a must-visit destination for nature enthusiasts.

Top 5 Must-See Tourist Destinations

- **Neuschwanstein Castle:** Nestled in the Bavarian Alps, Neuschwanstein Castle is a fairy-tale fortress that inspired Disneyland's Sleeping Beauty Castle. Built by King Ludwig II in the 19th century, the castle's stunning architecture and picturesque setting draw millions of visitors each year. Guided tours offer a glimpse into the opulent interiors and the king's eccentric vision.
- **The Black Forest:** Known for its dense woodlands, charming villages, and cuckoo clocks, the Black Forest (Schwarzwald) is a picturesque region in southwestern Germany. Visitors can explore hiking and biking trails, visit the spa town of Baden-Baden, or take a scenic drive along the Black Forest High Road. The region is also famous for its culinary specialties, including Black Forest cake and smoked ham.



Fast Facts

Capital: Berlin

Population: 83 million

Highest point: Zugspitze (9,718 feet)

Major Rivers: Rhine, Danube, Main, and Elbe

Germany

- **Heidelberg:** Heidelberg is a romantic city located on the banks of the Neckar River. Home to Germany's oldest university (founded in 1386), the city is steeped in history and academic tradition. Visitors can wander through the charming Old Town, visit the Heidelberg Castle ruins, and stroll along the Philosopher's Walk, which offers stunning views of the city and river.
- **Munich:** The capital of Bavaria, Munich is known for its rich cultural heritage, boisterous beer gardens, and the world-famous Oktoberfest. Key attractions include Marienplatz with its iconic Glockenspiel, the Nymphenburg Palace, and the Deutsches Museum, the world's largest museum of science and technology. The city's lively atmosphere and beautiful parks, such as the English Garden, make it a delightful, year-round destination.
- **Berlin:** In addition to being the capital, Berlin is a city full of history and modern attractions. The Berlin Wall Memorial, Checkpoint Charlie, and the Holocaust Memorial offer poignant reminders of the country's turbulent past. The busy nightlife, diverse culinary scene, and contemporary art galleries reflect Berlin's dynamic present.

Germany's history is marked by profound events that have shaped the nation and the world. The country was unified in 1871 under Prussian leadership, and it became a major European power. The 20th century saw two world wars originate from Germany, with the rise and fall of the Nazi regime leaving an indelible mark on global history. The division of Germany into East and West during the Cold War era culminated in the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent reunification in 1990. Today, Germany is a leading nation in the European Union and plays a significant role in global affairs.

