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5 MINUTE GUIDE: FRANKFURT



Credit: Kiedrowski, Rainer / German National Tourist Board

With a huge university, the world's largest annual book fair and plenty of world-class art, opera, ballet and theatre, Frankfurt is a diverse city with lots to offer visitors

About

On first glance, Frankfurt appears to be a city of gleaming skyscrapers, and it's true that as Europe's financial centre it has its fair share of banking headquarters. But the city has a long history of trade – the stock exchange was established in 1585, and the Rothschild family opened their first bank here in 1798 – and it's been a hospitable and interesting place since then. Head through the tall glass-and-steel buildings to the Römerberg (the medieval town square) and there's a beautiful complex of old buildings from the 15th to 18th centuries.

Attraction

The Natural History Museum in Senckenberg is set in a beautiful building dating back to 1907, and attracts around 500,000 visitors each year to see the biggest exhibition of large dinosaurs in Europe – including a dinosaur fossil with preserved scaled skin, the world's largest collection of stuffed birds and dioramas of extinct animals. A remodelling in 2003 added a reptile exhibit and an accessible rainforest tree offering views of different zones of the rainforest.

Building

St Bartholomew's Cathedral is a lovely red sandstone Gothic construction, built between the 13th and 15th centuries. At 95 metres tall, it manages to hold its own among the surrounding skyscrapers. It was designated as an Imperial Cathedral, and the coronation of Emperors took place in the Election Chapel between 1562 to 1792. Things to look out for include Hans Backoffen's Crucifixion, sculpted in 1509, and the Maria-Schlaf-Altar in the Marienkapelle, dating from 1434.

Shop

As you'd expect in a financial capital, there are plenty of opportunities to splash the cash. The Zeil shopping promenade has the main department stores as well as smaller independent shops.

Lots of shops along Zeil sell the traditional apple wine bembel, a carafe which comes with matching glasses.

Restaurant

For hearty German food, head for Adolf Wagner, a traditional apple wine cafe. Wurst, schnitzel and plenty of potatoes are on the menu, as well as the famous Frankfurt green sauce, made with seven fresh herbs. It's always packed to the rafters with locals and tourists enjoying the convivial, noisy atmosphere and drinking large quantities of cider.

Bar

The beautiful and lively neighbourhood of Sachsenhausen is the place to head for drinks: Alte Sachsenhausen has many traditional Frankfurter pubs scattered throughout its pedestrianised cobblestone streets. However, for something a little more upmarket, Luna Bar in the city centre is a classy art deco-style bar that was rated best cocktail bar in Germany by Playboy magazine. The classic cocktails are near-perfect.

View

The Main Tower is the only one of the city's skyscrapers that's open to the public. Take the lift up to the 650-foot high platform to enjoy panoramic views.

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