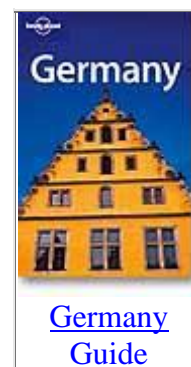


Author Interview:
Tom Parkinson on Germany

Join us each week in June for interviews with the authors of Lonely Planet's new 2004 guidebooks. This week, meet Germany Guide author, [Tom Parkinson](#).

What do you love about Germany?

I first visited Germany when I was 3, started learning the language at 13 and have just kept on going back; there's a great mix of tradition and total modernity in the cities, while the smaller towns and villages provide perfect getaways. The sheer variety of places and the different characters of individual states is always fascinating, and the vast quantity of top-class beer available never hurts!



What was the highlight of your travels when researching this book?

Visiting the many perfectly-preserved castles and Altstadt areas of towns like Stralsund, Schwerin, Erfurt, Meissen; exploring the booming nightlife in [Leipzig](#) and Dresden; staying in pretty mountain villages in the [Harz](#).

What was the lowlight?

Finding just about every single hotel room, bed and campsite on the Ostsee coast booked out in August; stations with no left-luggage lockers and dragging half a tonne of tourist brochures around in 37° temperatures; going to the wrong Buckow because no-one mentioned there were two!

What were the defining moments you encountered on the road?

Places which made the biggest impression and encapsulated the character of their surroundings include Dresden, Leipzig, Eisenach, Rheinsberg, [Potsdam](#); meeting up with former Sahara companions in [Brandenburg](#) and drinking all night with students in Marburg were particular highlights!

What makes Germany unique?

The entire past of the East German states up to 1989 is pretty much unique in Europe, and the legacy of the GDR, good and bad, is a major point of interest for visitors. The variety of scenery, from mountains to lakes and beaches, is also a real draw.

List your Top 5 things to see or do in Germany

1. Dresden & Leipzig - history, culture and an amazing number of bars per square yard.
2. Stralsund & Schwerin - lovely water-based towns stacked with red-brick architecture and fish restaurants .
3. The Brocken - not the most exciting hill in the Harz, but a fitting end to some stunning

walks.

4. Zappanale - unique rock festival in the honour of Frank Zappa, held in the historic town of Bad Doberan.

5. Güstrow - excellent day-trip from Rostock, dominated by the legacy of sculptor Ernst Barlach.

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About Tom Parkinson

Tom first visited Germany at the tender age of three, and was promptly involved in a road accident. Undeterred, he started learning the language at school and has been coming back ever since, eventually completing a German degree before striking out as a dictionary editor, freelance journalist and Lonely Planet author. Having spent a year living and working in Berlin, Tom was more than happy to explore the rest of the former East Germany for this book, braving witches in the Harz Mountains, culture overdose in Thuringia, thick accents in Saxony, crowded waterways in Brandenburg and holiday weekends in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, with a healthy dose of Western capitalism in Hesse for balance.