

DESTINATION

LEIPZIG

Town Hall



Leipzig — Big City Fun, Small Town Charm

By Christina Fernandes



If you think of Eastern Germany as stuck in the past, with lots of Soviet remnants and little charm, don't visit Leipzig. Your illusions will be shattered.

I admit that as a "Wessie" (a German from the former West) I had to readjust my image of the East after visiting this fabulous city.

Of course my stereotyped views of the ex-DDR were not exactly fair; in fact they were totally unfounded. The only place in the region I had ever been was Berlin-Pankow, the part of the capital that used to be socialist. But after almost two decades as one unified country, it seems that the "Ossies" (Germans from the former East) still struggle

for acknowledgement that they have just as much to offer as the West in terms of history, culture and, generally, things to do.

On the rare occasions I used to think of the Eastern cities, of which Leipzig is one of the most prominent, my mind would conjure up images of concrete, Soviet-style apartment buildings and a drab atmosphere. Luckily for visitors, this is far from reality.

Not only was the weather excellent while I was there (somehow I had always thought the skies above the ex-DDR were constantly grey), but Leipzig is a treasure trove of sight-seeing gems.

The City at a Glance

If you are into classical music, Leipzig will definitely be your cup of tea. The composer Johann Sebastian Bach was cantor at the Thomas Church from 1723 to 1750, 19th cen-

tury composers Robert Schumann and Felix Mendelssohn Bartoly used to live here and Richard Wagner was born here in 1813.

Museums are ten a penny in Leipzig as well — whether you are interested in the region's former socialist spy apparatus, applied art, anthropology or the city's history in general.

Architecture fans will also find plenty on offer to feast their eyes on; Renaissance buildings especially, with their elaborate decorations, are strongly represented.

If you are looking for a bit less intellectualism and a little more nature, Leipzig's zoo is the way forward. It's one of the oldest and most diverse in the world and the most popular leisure facility in town.

You will also find all the regular European fare in Leipzig — plenty of churches, street cafés, markets and shopping streets.

And if you can't be bothered to coordinate the details yourself, you can always take one of the organised tours of the city and its surroundings offered by the Leipzig Tourist Information.

History & Culture

Leipzig has seen its fair share of troubles and you can bear witness to its struggles on your visits if you so wish.

It is here that the peaceful revolution of 1989 was born. On October 9 that year, 70,000 people assembled in Nikolai Church to say a prayer for peace and then continued into Leipzig's streets in a non-violent demon-



Skyline

