




- HOME
- SILVERKRIS IN PICTURES
- IDEAS
- DESTINATIONS
- SIA NEWS
- CONTESTS & OFFERS
- CONTACT US



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[Home](#) > [Destinations](#) > [International](#) > [Harbour Cities Of North Germany](#)  
**WEB EXCLUSIVE!**

# Harbour Cities of North Germany

01 Oct 2012

Using the bustling port city of Hamburg as a gateway, **CHRISTINA NG** discovers the mediaeval charm and rich sailing heritage of the cities within north Germany's Schleswig-Holstein state.



Board a pleasure boat in Hamburg and enjoy a leisurely cruise.

Situated along the banks of the Elbe River and an entry point into Germany's northernmost state of Schleswig-Holstein, the maritime city-state of Hamburg does not take its reputation as "Germany's gateway to the world" lightly. As Germany's second largest city and major transport hub, its charm naturally lies in its rich harbour heritage.

## Take a boat trip in Hamburg

If Venice has bedazzled you with its romantic canals, Hamburg will similarly enchant with its extensive waterways that are crossed by over 2,300 bridges – more than the number in Amsterdam, Venice and London combined. Board a ferry or pleasure boat and enjoy a scenic water cruise, which gives you a unique perspective on Hamburg's splendid panorama.

Take your pick from a variety of boat tours lasting from 50 minutes to 3 hours, departing regularly from the Jungfernstieg promenade on the Inner Alster Lake. There are usually more boat tours operating in spring and summer, compared to autumn and winter, when it can get very windy and cold. Sometimes a boat tour may be cancelled due to weather conditions, so it's better to check on

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The simplest and shortest boat ride lasts about 50 minutes and takes in the Inner and Outer Alster lakes. This tour ends in the city centre, where you can choose to indulge in retail therapy at the Alsterarkaden (Alster Arcades), a charming riverside shopping centre with a structure reminiscent of buildings in Venice; or simply relax in one of Hamburg's numerous street cafes or restaurants like the grand **Parlament** restaurant situated in the basement of the Rathaus (Town Hall). An array of traditional German cuisine from classic Hamburg fish dishes to homemade venison sausages awaits you there.

## Get in on the action at the fish market



There's never a dull moment at the Hamburg Fish Market.

The boat trips are a great way to while away a languid afternoon, but if you prefer more excitement, make it a point to check out Hamburg's fish market along the banks of the Elbe River.

Every Sunday morning, vendors promote wares ranging from fresh fruits to flowers, T-shirts to shoes, in addition to fish, cheese and German sausages. The market, which dates back to 1703, takes place at the foot of the century-old Fish Auction Hall at the Hamburg Harbour. Entertainment in the form of live acts, from rock bands to choirs singing a cappella, add to the lively mood. The market opens every Sunday from 5am-9.30am, and from 7am-9.30am in winter.

## Lubeck – draped in mediaeval charm



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Buildings in Lübeck's Old Town consist of a variety of architectural styles.

Just a 50-minute drive north-east or an hour's train ride from Hamburg brings you to the quaint port city of Lübeck. Founded in 1143 as the first German city on the Baltic Sea, Lübeck was the principal city of a league of trading cities – known as the Hanseatic League – which monopolised the trade of the Baltic and North Seas from the 13th to the 15th century.

Despite the damage Lübeck suffered during World War II, the basic structure of its Old Town remains beautifully unaltered. Listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site, the Old Town offers an astonishing variety of architectural styles including Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque and Neoclassical. Its seven Gothic-style church towers, which have been around since mediaeval times, continue to add to the fairytale aura of this historic island. This is also boosted by parts of the old city walls that still stand, with only one city gate – the Holsten Gate – left intact. Most notable are the twin cylindrical towers of the Holsten Gate at Holstentorplatz, which had pride of place on the German 50 Mark banknote until the introduction of the Euro.

**1** 2 NEXT >>

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