

# Heidelberg

**Heidelberg** is a city in the state of Baden-Württemberg in the Federal Republic of Germany. <http://www.e-heidelberg.com/attractions/attractions.html>

## Understand

It is no secret that Heidelberg is a jewel among German travel destinations. Heidelberg is located in the Neckar river valley right where the dark **Odenwald** (Odin's Forest) opens up towards the plains of the Rhine valley. Heidelberg is home to the oldest university in Germany (est. 1386). With 28,000 students, the Ruprecht-Karls-Universität (or *Ruperto Carola*, as the university is called in Latin) is one of Germany's larger academic institutions and boasts the full spectrum of an ancient academy, from Egyptian Studies to Computer Linguistics. The faculties for Medicine, Law and Natural Sciences are considered to be among the best in Germany. The university fostered the settlement of several other world class research institutions such as the German Cancer Research Centre (DKFZ), the European Molecular Biological Laboratory (EMBL), Center for Molecular Biology (ZMBH), Max-Planck-Institutes for Medicine, Astronomy, Nuclear Physics and others. In a nutshell, Heidelberg is an academic city with a rich history and shows many similarities to cities like Cambridge or Oxford (Heidelberg and Cambridge, UK are twinned).

During WWII, the city was nearly completely spared by allied bombings which destroyed most of Germany's larger inner cities. As a result, Heidelberg has retained its baroque charm of narrow streets, picturesque houses and of course the world-famous Schloss (castle). After the war, the United States Armed Forces built large barracks on the southern end of the city. Therefore, Heidelberg's 130,000 inhabitants include not only the 28,000 students of the university, but also nearly 30,000 American citizens, almost all soldiers and their families. Together with the hundreds of thousands of annual visitors, Heidelberg is truly an internationally and culturally diverse destination, despite its small size.

Over the years, Heidelberg has attracted numerous artists, intellectuals and academics from all over Europe and has sometimes been called a secret intellectual capital of Germany. People who have lived and worked in the city include the poets Joseph von Eichendorff, Jean Paul and Goethe, scientists as Bunsen and Kirchhoff, philosophers as the founder of the "Illuminati" order von-Knigge, atheist Ludwig Feuerbach, existentialist Karl Jaspers, political theorist Hannah Arendt and many more. Mark Twain wrote in *A Tramp Abroad*:

...Out of a billowy upheaval of vivid green foliage ...rises the huge ruin of Heidelberg Castle, with empty window arches, ivy-mailed battlements, moldering

towers—the Lear of inanimate nature—deserted, uncrowned, beaten by the storms, but royal still, and beautiful.

## Get in

### By plane

The nearest major airport to Heidelberg is in Frankfurt—Lufthansa provides a shuttle bus <http://www.lufthansa-airportbus.de/> between the airport and Heidelberg on an hourly basis, for about €35 for the round trip, which takes about one hour. Other nearby airport serviced by low-cost carriers include Frankfurt Hahn, Mannheim (mainly a domestic airport), Baden-Baden, and Stuttgart. <http://www.airportcity-frankfurt.com/cms/default/rubrik/9/9682.htm>

### By train

The main train station is located in the western part of the city. There are direct train connections to Stuttgart, Karlsruhe, Mannheim and Frankfurt.

### By car

The A5 connects Heidelberg directly to Frankfurt and Karlsruhe. It's easy to reach from any direction.

## Get around

The city runs a small rather effective system of trams and busses. The two most important nodal points are the main station and *Bismarckplatz*. A mountain railway runs between four stations (including the castle), linking the old city on the level of the river with the summit of the *Königstuhl* Mountain, about 400 m (1312 feet) above the city. The "Heidelberg Card", a tourist pass which includes public transportation, many museums and the mountain railway, can be bought at the tourist information.

## See

- The **Altstadt** (historical city center) and Hauptstrasse (main street)
- The **Castle**
- The **Philosophenweg** which can be found on the northern side of the city. It provides a wonderful view across the oldest part of the city. Here can also be found the **Meridan Stich** which is a popular illustration of Heidelberg
- The **Heiligenberg** mountain which boasts a wonderful view over the old town
- The **Thingstätte** on top of Heiligenberg (an open-air theatre built by the Nazi regime in 1934 to host propaganda events)

- Also on the **Heiligenberg** the remnants of a wall ancient Celts built to keep Germanic tribes out, the Heidenloch, a deep well with unknown origins, and the ruins of a 10th century cloister.
- The Kurpfälzisches Museum on the Hauptstrasse, contains interesting exhibits of items from Heidelberg's pre-history to modern times.
- The old university on **Universitätsplatz** in the old city and the adjacent old armory which is now a student cafeteria (but also open to the public).
- **Jesuitenkirche** has 1712 Baroque construction with modern touches inside.
- The **Heiliggeistkirche** church is only one of many large and small churches, but definitely the one with the most interesting history. During the dark ages, it was the shelter of the *Bibliotheka Palatina*, Germany's oldest library. The Bibliotheka was stolen and brought to Rome but eventually returned in pieces. Today, parts of it can be visited in the University Library (also the oldest and probably the most valuable of its kind in Germany), which is situated close to the old university.

You can get a great view of the Heiliggeistkirche, Old Town, and the Neckar river bridge from the castle (Schloss Heidelberg).

## Do

The city boasts more than twelve cinemas, over eight theaters, including

- **Stadttheater** the large state-run theater, and
- **Zimmertheater** on Hauptstrasse, Germany's oldest private theater

There are also many progressive culture centers, including the famous **Karlstorbahnhof** in the east-end of the old city.

## Buy

- Don't miss out the exquisitely stocked record shop **Vinyl Only** on the university square.
- For books in English, try **The English Bookstore** at Plöck 93 (tel: 06221-183001).
- Go by the Cathedral during the day for small markets selling souvenirs

## Eat

- Snacks: Along the Hauptstrasse, which runs through the center of town, you will find several bakeries that serve local specialities including “Brezel” (pretzels). Department stores have a nice selection of delicatessen stalls called “Markthallen” where you can eat everything on the spot.

- Many of the cafes in Heidelberg set up outside tables when the weather is fair, and locals and tourists alike enjoy these. A popular destination for summer cafe beer sipping and lounging is the **Marktplatz**, which is adjacent to the **Heiliggeistkirche**.
- Meals: The Hauptstrasse is plentiful with an amazing variety of restaurants. Dishes tend to be served in large portions, relatively inexpensive and of good quality. You can find something for almost every taste including Japanese, Indian, Italian, Chinese, German and Bavarian. American fast food and "Döner" restaurants cater to the budget conscious and late-night crowds.
- **Supan's Thai Bistro**, on the Hauptstraße *right at the Universitätsplatz next to the "Vinyl Only" record shop*. An excellent, reasonably priced, Thai restaurant, with great service.
- **Korean/Sushi restaurant**, Heiliggeiststraße 3, close to the Marktplatz, next to the **Hotel zum Rathaus**, a seemingly little-known, but great sushi place (also serves Korean food).
- **Zum Goldenen Anker**, Rungenweg, [0] 6221 / 4862
- **Elia**, Promenadeplatz, [0] 6221 / 7820
- **Turmstube**, Schützenstr. , [0] 6221 / 20114
- **Kashmir**, Strasse, [0] 6221 / 20719
- **Rizo**, Lorchheimer-Str, [0] 6221 / 8801
- **Eatery**, Breisacherstr. , [0] 6221 / 10079
- **Nabucco**, Eichenweg, [0] 6221 / 18191
- **Perazza**, Buschkoppel, [0] 6221 / 7234
- **Roter Ochs**, Kumbacher Str., [0] 6221 / 6528
- **Die Eselin**, Aberlestraße , [0] 6221 / 13489
- **Bierhelder Hof**, Schönfeldstrasse , [0] 6221 / 811
- **Kao Kao**, Haupstr, [0] 6221 / 14012

## Drink

More than 300 bars, pubs, clubs, discotheques and the like, from Bavarian style tourist restaurants with deer antlers on the walls to extremely left-wing student bars which reserve the right to refuse policemen entry to the bar. You name it. Find your place and enjoy yourself. Heidelberg knows no curfew. Most bars close at 1am, but especially the student's bars are often open until the early morning. Although the locals -- even the police officers -- are used to drunken tourists as well as to drunken students, please be calm on your way home and do not riot. As a remnant of the student revolts, Heidelberg has the largest ratio of policemen per capita and you may find yourself in the arms of an officer much faster than you think.

If you are a young person and happen to discover one of the student parties (which are quite numerous but advertised mostly by word-of-mouth), you scored the jackpot. Get

inside, get a beer and have fun. But try and avoid being recognized as a tourist. No party ends before 3am and many run until 6 or 7am. Either Untere Straße or the Zieglers (Heidelberg's oldest students' bar) are frequently crowded with students.

- Wines are produced around Heidelberg (i.e. 'Königstuhl'), but it might be difficult to get hold of them. Always a safe bet is a Riesling from Pfalz or some white wine from Baden instead, or try any of the numerous wines from other German wine regions.
- Next to the Old Bridge, there are two small breweries: The **Kulturbrauerei** in the Leyergasse and **Vetter's Brauhaus** in the Steingasse. Vetter's is famous for having one of the strongest beers in world (Vetter 33).
- If you want to mix with the locals, try the *Untere Strasse*, which runs between the Hauptstrasse and the river, parallel to both. It is packed with the student bars, including the crowded:
  - **Großer Mohr**. Small but highly recommended. Tuesday night the odds are high to find the *Mohr* besieged by medical students.
  - **Sonderbar**. The latter boasts a huge collection of absinthe, whiskeys, as well as a very distinctive atmosphere.
  - **Destille** There is a tree in the center of the establishment.
  - **Trinidad** This cocktail bar at the edge of the Old Town is small, but famous for its drinks and continuously receives praise in local restaurant guides.
  - **O'Reillys**, An Irish pub north of the river, just over the bridge from Bismarckplatz).
  - **Dubliner** A good Irish pub at the center of Heidelberg Main street (Downtown)
  - **Ham Ham's** A great place to chill, drink, and smoke.
  - **Nektar** A very relaxed and chill place to enjoy a drink and party
  - **B.J.Z. Bar** Great place to party in Emmertsgrund, its a B.Y.O.A. (Bring your own alcohol) and you can crash anywhere in the house

If you are looking for coffee rather than alcohol, **Star Coffee** has two branches, one off Bismarckplatz and the other on the Hauptstrasse, serving a variety of coffees and offering free WiFi access. Less computers but more style are to find in the two **Moro Cafe's** on directly at the Alte Brücke and one on the Hauptstraße.

## Be Safe

Heidelberg is an extremely safe city (even by German standards). However, women walking alone at night should take the usual precautions they would anywhere else. Walking along the northern Neckar banks at night would not be advised, except in groups, particularly by the Studentenwohnheime (dorms) the shrubs are thick and it is very dark. Taxi rides are cheap (compared to big city standards), use as needed. There are also "Frauentickets" available for women, you can buy these coupons for 8€ and they will cover the fare for anywhere in the city.

Don't walk on bicycle lanes (they are often painted in red, but always separated from the pedestrian lanes by a white line): Heidelberg has more cyclists than motorists, and many of them have a rather cavalier way of riding. The southern parallel street to *Hauptstrasse* (called *Plöck*) is the main traffic channel for student cyclists between Bismarkplatz and University Square. During the day it can be such a buzz, it's already a sight worth visiting. But watch out: Many cyclists feel safe from the tourists there and lose all their good manners.

## Get out

- **Darmstadt**
- **Frankfurt**
- **Heilbronn**
- **Karlsruhe**
- **Mannheim**
- **Weinheim** - A small city between Darmstadt and Heidelberg

For more info see: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

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