



MARICELLA MIRANDA

ST. PAULI MUST SEES

- Every adult visiting Hamburg should experience a trip to the Reeperbahn. I wouldn't recommend it for families, because of the red-light district, which houses several sex shops and strip clubs. The streets can get crowded Friday and Saturday nights, so visit the area at dusk.
- Search out the Beatles-Platz, where metal statutes honor the rock 'n' legends. The Beatles, David Bowie, Ray Charles and other musical icons also played at clubs on the street Grosse Freiheit.
- Take the subway to the stop Landungsbrücken to walk along Hamburg's port. Restaurants with views of the river are also there. The area offers a quiet, yet slightly upscale, St. Pauli experience.
- Locals prefer to visit establishments north of the Reeperbahn, outside the red-light district where there are fewer crowds and sex shops. Residents are regulars at bars along the street Hamburger Berg.
- Football fans — soccer fans in the United States — should score tickets to an FC St. Pauli game. The team plays home games at Millerntor-Stadion, the club's stadium, a few streets away from the Reeperbahn.

LEFT: Pedestrians stroll past statues at Beatles-Platz, where Reeperbahn and Grosse Freiheit streets meet. The spot is devoted to the band's 1960s performances in Hamburg.

CONTINUED FROM 5E

> **Walk on the wild side**

St. Pauli's shoreline are mostly museums.

My first visit was in the afternoon during the week. I immediately noticed an alternative, underground culture

that contrasted sharply with Hamburg's posh downtown with its Prada stores and white-linen restaurants. Young beggars, some with their dogs, pleaded with tourists for spare change. Some slept outside bars and sex shops. A few walked shirtless or shoeless. They bumped shoulders with vacationers who were snapping photos and exploring the roughly 1½-square-mile neighborhood.

Drinking begins early in St. Pauli. In fact, some bars and clubs never close. As the story goes, St. Pauli used to cater to seamen who would work a day or two at the port, get paid and then spend their earnings on drinks and prostitutes, said Henning Bunte, a local who owns the St. Pauli Tourist Office. His company gives tours of the district, sharing its history and secrets. Port jobs became scarce in

the 1970s with the introduction of shipping containers, he said. The seamen who had jobs traveled south and left the red-light district to the tourists. The area, which has about 27,000 residents, has since attracted foreigners from Turkey, Yugoslavia and China. It also has become a favorite among artists. But St. Pauli is undergoing a gentrification. Today's rising home costs make it nearly impossible for the working class to live there, Bunte said.

Many St. Pauli residents, like Bunte, live north of Reeperbahn, where the red-light district exists. On the Reeperbahn, prostitution is legal. In fact, prostitution was a part of St. Pauli's inception. The profession has experienced legal ups and downs throughout German history, but in 2002 the country reformed its laws giving prostitutes more rights. Sex shop after sex shop populates Reeperbahn, drawing attention to the sexy costumes and adult toys in the shop windows. The businesses are like massive department stores.

the barriers, and a group of drunken men stumbled by, clinging to each other for balance. Another drunken man rolled head first onto the dirty brick street. We followed the crowd to Hans-Albers-Platz, a pedestrian square surrounded by Irish and British bars. Some locals say the square offers the best people-watching. It also houses Pizzeria Alt Hamburg, a favorite stop in St. Pauli day or night. Through a window, customers ordered the hand-size pizzas as the owner cooked them in a wood-burning brick oven. I became a regular during my short Hamburg visit.

GO GETAWAYS

KEY

- Attraction (casino, fair, racetrack etc.)
- Beach
- Bicycle Trail
- Boat Ramp
- Cabin rental
- Campground
- Canoeing
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INSIDE THE GATES

There's also the Herbertstrasse, designated for prostitutes who sit in store windows awaiting business. Steel gates from the 1930s hide Herbertstrasse. My curiosity led me one day to a set of those rusty red gates. Before arriving in Germany, I had heard rumors that only men were allowed behind the gates. As an American woman, I doubted if that was true.

Outside the three gates, each partly covering the other, I could see only a dirty red awning and pink lights lining another awning. Graffiti and stickers covered most of the top of the gates. A more formal sign stated in English: "Entry for men under 18 and women prohibited." As I snapped a picture of the

ST. PAULI AT NIGHT

The real St. Pauli unfolded for me on a Saturday night. My travel companion and I took the subway to St. Pauli Landing Bridges, known as Landungsbrücken, south of the Reeperbahn. Our first stop was the Elberk, a mellow contemporary bar on the river. Seated on the restaurant's black-leather sofas and on the outdoor deck, customers sip mojitos and gaze upon the river canals. But the drinks didn't prepare us for St. Pauli at night. A massive party scene erupted at sunset on the streets with thousands of partygoers. We walked north on Davidstrasse, past the red steel gates. Women stood outside

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

I don't blame locals for staying clear of the Reeperbahn. The chaos can be a lot to bear. A few streets north of the red-light district on Seilerstrasse, I found a mellow sanctuary at May Cafe, a coffee shop and bar. Customers rested on vintage couches and chairs in a large room with an ornate gold ceiling and pillar moldings. Acoustic music and the clatter of dishes muffled people's chatter. An abundance of windows allowed natural light to brighten the room. I kept my order easy: Milchkaffee, a coffee with steamed milk. Across the street, a fuchsia sign advertised: Sex Kino Sex Shop. Delivery trucks and other traffic passed by as a new crowd of tourists entered St. Pauli for the weekend. I watched, happy to have staked a claim on a quiet cafe seat.

Maricella Miranda is a freelance writer and former Pioneer Press reporter traveling throughout Europe.

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