Welcome to Bonn

2.1 University City with Flair

Alexander von Humboldt, we are told, who is renowned for having seen and experienced so much of the world on his travels, once stood at the “Alter Zoll”, one of the surviving parts of the old Bonn fortifications, enjoying the view over the Rhine to the “Seven Mountains” on the other side and declaring it to be one of the most beautiful panoramas in the world. Even if this incident never actually took place, and we have nothing to prove it did, it certainly could be true, as anyone who has stood on the same spot and let their eyes roam over the Rhinescape will tell you.

When you start looking around your new home you will soon realize that “the northernmost town in Italy” as it is known has a lot more to offer than just beautiful surroundings criss-crossed by cycle routes and footpaths. Bonn has a vibrant theater and cinema scene, for example, not to mention a whole host of museums. And, last but not least, it has international flair that is not only a result of the many UN institutions located here.

However, Bonn is also a prospering business center and the heart of a pulsating science region with a number of high-profile non-university research institutions – something many of you will probably be able to turn to your advantage during your stay here. Many of the companies and institutions located here not only have job opportunities for partners but also cooperate with the University of Bonn itself in many fields. We have put together everything else you need to know about this university city on the following pages. We may not have included absolutely everything, but we certainly hope it will help you get off to a good start in Bonn.
2.2 Bonn – a City with Many Facets

Bonn is one of Germany’s growth regions and, despite the fact that more than 15 years have now elapsed since the parliament and much of the government moved to Berlin, it is more international than ever. Bonn started to make its mark on the international stage right back in the 1950s when it was the capital of Germany, and its top-class museums and concert halls are by no means typical for a medium-sized city. When the parliament moved away, Bonn saw no reason to bury its head in the sand. On the contrary, Bonn has continued to pursue its goal of becoming an international hub for research and sustainable development with as much dedication as ever. And with no small success as the facts prove.

Federal City

Bonn is a ‘Bundesstadt’, or Federal City. Although the members of parliament, nearly all the diplomats and representatives of the Federal States have long since made their way to Berlin together with most of the lobbyists, all the ministries still maintain a presence in Bonn, indeed six of them have their first official residence here. One focus of Bonn’s activities as a seat of government is development policy. In addition to the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the ‘Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)’ also has its headquarters in Bonn. It’s not surprising after all, that about 150 international or internationally operating organizations have settled in Bonn, many of which focusing on development policy and/or humanitarian aid. Moreover, as nearly 50 federal agencies like the Federal Court of Auditors or the Federal Cartel Office are also located here, the old city on the Rhine still plays an important role in politics to this day.

Bonn – Some Statistics

Geographical Location:
50°44'2" north; 7°6'8" east
(point of reference: university main building); 196.85 feet above sea level.

Area:
87.73 square miles, three-quarters of which are on the left bank of the Rhine; 24.48 square miles are wooded. There are 47 streams in Bonn, most of which flow into the Rhine.

Climate:
With an average annual mean temperature of 10.3 °C Bonn is one of the warmest regions in Germany. In summer the temperature may go up to 30°C; in winter it may even drop below zero.

Tallest Buildings:
The radio mast on the Venusberg (180 m), the Post Tower (at 162.5 m, the highest office building in North Rhine-Westfalia and 5 m higher than Cologne Cathedral), the “Langer Eugen” (115 m, former House of Representatives, now center of the UN Campus).

Bonn – Some Statistics

Population:
320,820 inhabitants, of whom some 89,000 have moved to Bonn from 175 countries across the world; 36% of the Bonn population are Catholics, 20% Protestants.

Health:
According to a study carried out by the Hannover Medical School, Bonn is a particularly healthy place to live: in their “Health Atlas” Bonn came fourth amongst the 81 largest towns in Germany. The researchers based their study on the figures for healthcare, air quality, green areas, sports facilities and crèche availability.

(as of October 2016)
Welcome to Bonn

UN City

Today, the political and administrative center Bonn also enjoys international significance as a base of the United Nations. Some 19 UN organizations have now established their seat in Bonn so that around the German UN Headquarters in the former House of Representatives (“Langer Eugen”) there is a whole cluster of research and learning in Germany. Universities of applied science in the region, along with the University of Bonn, are centers of research and learning in Germany. The Bonn Museum of Modern Art, the Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, and the German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases (DZNE). And in addition to all this, you do not need to go far to find the most important research funding organizations: The German Research Foundation (DFG), the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, and the German Federal State of the Rhineland) and the Alexander Koenig Research Museum (natural history museum and zoological research institution). So there is plenty to do apart from working.

Business Center

When it comes to brilliant prospects for the future, Bonn has been given an "official" seal of approval: According to the DeKaBank’s city rankings, which came in first place amongst the German cities of national and regional importance. Even if the city used to be a bit too self-satisfied with its role as capital of Germany, it has long since recognized the significance of the business factor. Bonn is a dynamic and growing business location. It was, of course, a real stroke of luck for the city that some of today’s global players like Deutsche Post DHL and Deutsche Telekom, for the city that some of today’s global players – be it the Fraunhofer Society, the German Aerospace Center (DLR), the Max Planck institutes, or the German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases in the Helmholtz Association – have now established their seat in Bonn so that some of today’s global players have their headquarters in Bonn when they were privatized. These listed service giants are of eminent importance to the city and the region – symbolized by the Post Tower, one of the landmarks of the 2,000-year-old city on the Rhine. Post and Telekom not only mean thousands of workplaces for highly qualified personnel; they also draw their own suppliers, sub-contractors and service providers to the business center. There are, of course, other companies apart from the city’s main telecommunication company such as SolarWorld, a company dedicated to the manufacture of photovoltaic products, and the global tea smaler manufacturer Harro Bio. Without a doubt, Bonn is one of the leading centers of research and learning in Germany. Apart from the University of Bonn and the four universities of applied science in the region, there are a whole host of research institutes belonging to the Fraunhofer Society, the German Aerospace Center (DLR), the Max Planck Society and many other important institutes like the Center of Advanced European Studies and Research (Caesar) which focuses on user-oriented basic research in the neurosciences. Other outstanding establishments include the Life & Brain Research Center and the German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases (DZNE). And in addition to all this, you do not need to go far to find the most important research funding organizations: The German Research Foundation (DFG), the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) are all located in Bonn.

Cultural Center

Culturally, the Beethoven city Bonn has a lot to offer, too, and not just in connection with its famous son who is appropriately honored with the Beethoven House and the annual Beethoven Festival. Bonn has an opera house and theater, a symphony orchestra and countless fringe venues. There is a plethora of distinguished museums including the Art and Exhibition Hall of the Federal Republic of Germany; the Bonn Museum of Modern Art; the House of the History of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Deutsches Museum Bonn (museum of post-1945 research and technology in Germany), the DLR-Landesmuseum (museum of cultural history of the Rhineland) and the Alexander Koenig Research Museum (natural history museum and zoological research institution). So there is plenty to do apart from working.

What Else?

Bonn is a green city in an attractive location at the entrance to the romantic middle section of the Rhine (UNESCO World Heritage). Here you can live extremely well and you can find many appealing leisure opportunities. Whether you seek recreation, nature adventures or family activities – the opportunities are most diverse and accessible by public transit. Wine tasting in the Ahr valley? Hiking in the Eifel National Park or a relaxing Rhine cruise? There is a lot to discover!

When it comes to brilliant prospects for the future, Bonn has been given an “official” seal of approval: According to the DeKaBank’s city rankings, which came in first place amongst the German cities of national and regional importance. Bonn actually carries the first place amongst the German cities of national and regional importance.
2.3 A Quick Tour Through History

The fate of this city, which celebrated its bi-millenium in 1989 (after Trier but before Cologne), has always been determined by the River Rhine, and continues to do so to this day. On the left bank the Romans erected their castra bonnensia, a mighty fort on the border to the lands of the Barbarians on the other side of the Rhine. Even soldiers need provisions, so tradespeople and craftsmen, farmers and innkeepers, servants and riffraff of all kinds gravitated towards the camp. The town of Bonn was born, even if it only received its formal charter much later in the Middle Ages.

Let’s take a quick tour through Bonn’s history: The Romans were followed by the Franks, Roman gods by Christianity; then came the secular and religious rulers of the Middle Ages, the kings, emperors and prince electors of Cologne. The latter were of particular importance for Bonn (and its university). Fed up with the continual in-fighting with the confident citizens of their own town, as early as 1601, they decided without further ado to transfer their residence to Bonn where the citizens were apparently less obstreperous. Here they set themselves up as befitted their station with a palace in town (today’s university main building), “Schloss Clemensruhe” (today’s “Poppelsdorfer Schloss” which belongs to the university) and the “Jagdschloss Herzogsfreude”, a hunting lodge in the “Kottenforst” forest near Bonn which no longer exists today. This continued until Napoleon occupied the Rhineland, which was then allotted to the Prussians at the Congress of Vienna. Friedrich Wilhelm, King of Prussia, founded the University of Bonn in 1818, gave it his name and threw in the palaces to become places of learning.

Initially, people in Bonn were less than happy about losing their role as capital of Germany. But the people of Bonn are also the people of the Rhineland, and so they soon reminded themselves of the paragraphs in the “Basic Law of the Rhineland” which state “Et es, wie et es” (Things are what they are) and “Watt fott es, es fott” (What’s gone, is gone.). This may smack of resignation, but it is actually the extraordinary ability of people in the Rhineland to adapt quickly to new circumstances. After all, they know “Et hätt noch emmer jot jejange” (It’ll all come out in the wash.).

Bonn can look back with genuine pride on the 50 years dividing these two decisions. It was from the “Small Town in Germany” of John Le Carré fame that the economic miracle of the post-war years was launched; it was in the “Bundesdorf” (“federal village”), as the seat of government was mockingly known, that by way of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the European Economic Community (EEC), many of the seminal decisions were taken that have created Europe as we know it today: a continent (almost) without borders, with (almost) identical aims and ideals. In retrospect, the major achievement of the “Bonn Republic” was to ensure its citizens peace and prosperity.
2.4 Culture and Leisure Opportunities

The People of the Rhineland

Apropos the people of the Rhineland or “Rheinländer”. Who and what is a “Rheinländer”? This brings us back to the river that gives its name to the people, the main traffic route of ancient times. Everyone arrived by river: Celts and Romans, Franks and Goths, Vikings and Frisians and, later on, Bavarians, Swiss, Dutch, French, Prussians and many others – some as peaceful traders, others as hostile invaders. And many of them stayed on indefinitely. So, as the German author Carl Zuckmayer put it, they are a bit of everything. And this is even truer of the Bonn population today: when Bonn was the capital, people were recruited from every single Federal State to work at the ministries and supreme federal authorities, and they have now become “locals”. At some stage, they got the bug, too, infected by the charm of the town with its almost Mediterranean flair, its elegant avenues like the “Poppelsdorfer Allee”, spacious parks like the “Rheinaue”, dense forests like the “Kottenforst”, panoramic views from the “Drachenfels” or the “Petersberg” and the hiking trails in the “Eifel” and “Ahr” regions. And they were also infected by the overwhelmingly happy-go-lucky inhabitants of this region themselves who tend to be more tolerant than opinionated, more hedonistic than Spartan, art lovers rather than philistines.

The city on the Rhine is to Beethoven a bit what Bayreuth is to Wagner and Salzburg to Mozart: a festival city. There have been festivals of various kinds in Bonn since 1845, and with varying degrees of success. Today, the annual Beethoven Festival has become jours fixes in the diaries of classical music fans. Every year in autumn, a four-week festival takes place in Bonn featuring world-famous performers and highly talented young musicians. And in time for the anniversary year in 2020, the city’s largest concert venue, the Beethovenhalle, will reopen after major refurbishment.

Gadarka daa. Got it? Correct: Beethoven, Ludwig van, 1770 to 1827, one of the greatest composers of all time and Bonn’s greatest son. If you are talking about Bonn as a cultural center, you will not get round Beethoven: the “Beethoven-Haus” (his birthplace), the “Beethovenhalle” (concert hall), “Beethoven-Kammermusiksaal” (chamber concert hall), Beethoven Archives, Beethoven Orchestra, Beethoven Foundation, Beethoven Statue, Beethoven Competition, Beethoven Ring (awarded to outstanding young musicians), “Bürger für Beethoven” (friends of the International Beethoven Festival), Beethoven Guided Tour, “Beethovenstraße” (street name) – and in the very near future, the celebrations to mark the 250th anniversary of Beethoven’s birth.

The city on the Rhine is to Beethoven a bit what Bayreuth is to Wagner and Salzburg to Mozart: a festival city. There have been festivals of various kinds in Bonn since 1845, and with varying degrees of success. Today, the annual Beethoven Festival has become jours fixes in the diaries of classical music fans. Every year in autumn, a four-week festival takes place in Bonn featuring world-famous performers and highly talented young musicians. And in time for the anniversary year in 2020, the city’s largest concert venue, the Beethovenhalle, will reopen after major refurbishment.

For more information about Bonn and its diverse cultural opportunities, visit the following websites:

- Tourism & Culture, Sport & Leisure: [www.bonn.de](http://www.bonn.de)

Welcome to Bonn
It goes without saying that the Beethoven Orchesta does not only play Beethoven, and apart from Enrica and Elise, there are plenty of other opportuNies to enjoy the arts in Bonn. Bonn’s Opera House has a very good reputation, as does the Theater in Bad Godesberg. Experimental per- formances can be seen at the “Workstattbühne” or the “Halle Beulé”. There is also a private theater and concert scene serving all tastes from comedy to political cabaret, from Blues to Rock. Venues include the Kontra Kreis Theater, Kleines Theater Bad Godesberg, Eura Theater Central, Brotfabrik, Pantheon, Haus der Springmaus, Junges Theat er Bonn, Theater im Ballsaal, Pathologie, The- atrer im Keller, Harmonie, Anno Tubac and many, many more. One venue deserves special mention: “KUNSTRASEN”. On this plot in the Rheinaue park, open-air concerts take place throughout the sum- mer. Many thousand people can come here to listen to international names from the pop, rock, blues and folk circuits.

Another highlight of Bonn’s museum landscape is the “LVR-LandesMuseum”, a recently renovated, state of the art museum dedicated to the cultural history of the Rhineland. Here you can trace the history of the area – from the Neanderthals of the Stone Age via the Romans and the Middle Ages to modern times. Another feature of this diverse landscape is the Women’s Museum, once the very first of its kind in the world, focussing, as the name implies, on the work of female artists. And finally there is the Beethoven House, the compos- er’s birthplace, containing treasures like original scores and musical instruments from the period, some of which belonged to the maestro himself.

A word should be said about the contribution made by the University of Bonn to the city’s mu- seum landscape. Although primarily intended for study and research purposes, the university’s museums and collections are also open to the public. Every so often, the university museums and collections even hit the headlines around the globe as is the case when the largest flower in the world is in bloom in the Botanical Gardens. A visit to the university museums is also guaranteed to be an exciting, entertaining and instructive outing. Give it a try!

It goes without saying that the Beethoven Or- chestra does not only play Beethoven, and apart from Enrica and Elise, there are plenty of other opportuNies to enjoy the arts in Bonn. Bonn’s Opera House has a very good reputation, as does the Theater in Bad Godesberg. Experimental per- formances can be seen at the “Workstattbühne” or the “Halle Beulé”. There is also a private theater and concert scene serving all tastes from comedy to political cabaret, from Blues to Rock. Venues include the Kontra Kreis Theater, Kleines Theater Bad Godesberg, Eura Theater Central, Brotfabrik, Pantheon, Haus der Springmaus, Junges Theat er Bonn, Theater im Ballsaal, Pathologie, The- atrer im Keller, Harmonie, Anno Tubac and many, many more. One venue deserves special mention: “KUNSTRASEN”. On this plot in the Rheinaue park, open-air concerts take place throughout the sum- mer. Many thousand people can come here to listen to international names from the pop, rock, blues and folk circuits.
Insider Info: When is carnival?
The precise date of the street carnival is determined by the date of Easter: Ash Wednesday, the end of carnival and the beginning of the Christian fast, Lent, is always 46 days before Easter Sunday.

Customs and Events

“In Bonn ist was los!” (There’s loads happening in Bonn). This slogan that was originally the motto of a municipal summer program for children is actually true all year round. Any excuse is better than none to have a celebration in the Rhineland. And, if there is no excuse, you simply devise “events.”

One event that did not need devising is the famous, indeed infamous, traditional “Rheinischer Karneval”. The carnival season officially opens at 11 minutes past 11 o’clock on 11 November every year and lasts until the beginning of Lent, usually in February or March. It culminates in a street carnival that lasts from “Weiberfastnacht”, which is the Thursday before Ash Wednesday, until the end of “Karnevalsdienstag” (Mardi Gras). Under the motto “jeck simmer all”, “jeck” being a pun meaning that everyone is crazy/a carnival reveller, people in the Rhineland don costumes and launch themselves into the merry-making, be it at indoor events known as “Sitzungen” or at the equally popular street carnival which reaches its climax with parades on “Rosenmontag” (Carnival Monday).

Bonn, or more precisely the part of town on the right bank called Beuel, played a special role in the history of carnival in the Rhineland. It was here that “Weiberfastnacht” (Women’s Carnival Day) was born.

And this is how it came about: in the 19th century, Beuel was a laundry servicing center. The women did their employers’ washing in the Rhine and their husbands took it back to the owners, as far away as nearby Cologne. At carnival time, the men particularly enjoyed their work, staying on for several days in the cathedral city and only returning home when their purses were empty. At some stage, the women got really fed up with their husbands’ escapades and used their absence to celebrate their own carnival. When the men came home they were duly ashamed and ate humble pie, but to no avail: they were excluded from the proceedings and continue to be so to this very day. And that is the reason why the Thursday before “Rosenmontag” is the highest point of the carnival season on the right bank of the Rhine. On this day, the “Wiewer” (women) storm Beuel Town Hall and, every year, the men posted to defend it experience the most monumental defeat.

Another highlight not to be overlooked is the International Silent Film Festival in Bonn that draws cinema lovers from far and wide to the inner courtyard of the university main building every summer. For 11 days, Germany’s largest film festival of its kind shows famous and less famous movies from the early days of cinema – exactly as they were shown at the time: in some cases, hand-colored, in the original picture format and at the right speed. The whole event is a feast for the ears, too: some of the best and most renowned silent film pianists in the world provide the appropriate musical accompaniment.

And what could be nicer on a balmy summer evening than fleeing the lab or lecture hall in favor of a seat in a beer garden on the Rhine – with a direct view of the river and the Seven Mountains in the background.
Music Festivals

People in Bonn love music and the open air. So, every year in the summer three open-air festivals take place in Bonn: Rockaue, the Green Juice Festival and Panama Open Air. Famous and less well-known artists from all over the world guarantee top entertainment and atmospheric summer evenings. The City Garden Concerts at the “Alter Zoll” are also very popular – they are free of charge and take place right next to the university main building.

“Rhine in Flames”

One of the most spectacular events of the year takes place on the first Saturday in May, the mega firework display “Rhine in Flames”. People congregate in their thousands between Linz and Bonn to experience the kaleidoscope of lights. A mighty convoy of illuminated ships sails down the river, passing the banks and vineyards bathed in Bengal fire. Rockets shoot up and explode in the night sky, raining down millions of colored stars. The whole event ends with a magnificent pyrotechnical display in the “Rheinaue”, the park along the bank of the Rhine, which is the venue for a huge party lasting the whole day. It is an absolute must see, especially as it is completely free of charge.

“Pützchens Markt”

Every year, on the second Friday in September, it is time for a big happening, and one that lots of people in Bonn look forward to for weeks beforehand: “Pützchens Markt”. Pützchen, part of Beuel, becomes a place of pilgrimage for young and old alike – it has been for the last 640 years because what actually used to be a place of pilgrimage is now the venue for Germany’s fifth largest annual fair, attracting up to 1.5 million visitors. Hundreds of fairground rides – from Loop-O-Planes to Chair-O-Planes, lottery booths, snack stalls, beer tents and wine bars all haul in the crowds. And, to cap it all, there is a “Plundermarkt”, stalls selling every kind of bric-à-brac you can imagine. It is a gaudy, strident, noisy world of adventure in which the children are not the only ones to gape in open-mouthed astonishment.

Well, that was it, although it was, of course, by no means everything. The Easter Fair in Beuel, the Museum Mile Festival, Bonnfest, Deutsche Post Marathon, the Bonn ‘Kratholz’, United Nations Day, Open Monument Day, Family Play Day, the Bonn Beer Festival, maniemen’s festivals and, on every third Saturday in the month, the enormous flea market in the “Rheinaue” – you could keep adding to the list indefinitely. But now it is your turn to get out and discover Bonn yourself. It will not take you long to decide on your own favorites.