Unit 10

Mehr wissen: über Norddeutschland

Northern Germany has a distinct identity … and its own language.

*Aspekte Norddeutschlands: Stolze Stadtstaaten, klares Hochdeutsch, Plattdeutsch, das unbekannte Schleswig-Holstein*

The North of Germany looks different; both its traditional architecture and the landscapes are distinctive. For a start, all of Germany’s coastline is situated in this part of the country. Cities such as Lübeck, Hamburg and Bremen can look back on centuries of proud independence. (In fact, Hamburg and Bremen have maintained their status as **Stadtstaaten**, and are **Länder** (states) of the Federal Republic, the equals of much bigger states such as Bavaria and Brandenburg.) All three were members of the Hanseatic League, an international association of ports, which meant that their links were with places across the Baltic or North Sea rather than inland Germany. So proud are the three cities of this part of their history that their car registrations uniquely contain an extra letter at the front: HH, HB and HL. The H stands for **Hansestadt**, Hanseatic City.

You will find the German spoken in the North easy to understand. Some words are different: visitors from the rest of the German-speaking world (and most foreigners!) have to remember to call Saturday **Sonnabend** (literally ‘the eve of Sunday’) rather than **Samstag**, and to ask for an **Alsterwasser** (‘Alster water’, after the lake in the centre of Hamburg) if they want a beer with lemonade, known as **Panasche** or **Radler** in other parts of the country. And while a butcher’s shop is a **Fleischerei** or **Metzgerei** elsewhere, it is called a **Schlachterei** in the North. However, everybody speaks **Hochdeutsch** (Standard German), the form of the language you are learning as a foreigner. **Hochdeutsch**, literally ‘High’ German, is so called because it originated in the more mountainous South, not because it is considered to have higher status!

Ironically, the reason why North Germans speak clear, ‘correct’ **Hochdeutsch** is that it was introduced into Northern Germany as a learnt language, while in the southern homelands of **Hochdeutsch** it is heavily influenced by the regional or local dialects that most people speak. Historically, however, the people of Northern Germany spoke Low German (**Niederdeutsch)**, the language of the lower, flatter North, popularly known as **Plattdeutsch**. It is basically the same language as Dutch (incidentally, the same word as **Deutsch**, so Dutch is historically the German of what are still referred to as the ‘Low Countries’). You can hear its influence in the rhythms and pronunciation of Standard German as spoken in the North: the shortened form of the greeting **Guten Tag** sounds just like its **Plattdeutsch** equivalent **Dag** with the typically Northern final -g pronounced like the -ch in **Dach**.

**English Hochdeutsch Platt-/Niederdeutsch**

*day* der Tag de Dag

*night* die Nacht de Natt

*evening* der Abend de Obend

*morning* der Morgen de Morn

The far North of Germany is little known to outsiders. Schleswig-Holstein has it all. It even has hills, something unknown in the rest of the North. If it sounds appealing, you could try a cycling holiday there. [www.sh-tourismus.de/de/radfahren-in-schleswig-holstein](http://www.sh-tourismus.de/de/radfahren-in-schleswig-holstein)

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Antworten

1 Benedikt XVI (Joseph Ratzinger)

2 Steffi Graf

3 Karl Marx

4 Martin Luther

5 Ludwig van Beethoven

6 Angela Merkel

7 Franz Beckenbauer

8 Sigmund Freud

9 Roger Federer

10 Franz Kafka