

Europe, July to September 2026

August 8, Warnemunde, Germany

Today should prove to be interesting. There is a choice of outings. One is to Berlin, but we did not opt for that one. It is a 3-hour bus ride in each direction with 6 hours of free time in the middle. Half of a 12-hour day on a bus is not a vacation.

Our choice was a short 10-mile ride to Rostock, the capital of this region and the first time we have been in what used to be East Germany.

The first thing our guide told us is that the people here are not very talkative. For example, when you meet someone, you might say guten morgen, guten tag, or guten abend depending on whether it is morning, day, or night. Also depending on whether you are in Germany or not. She said that was too many syllables for the northern Germans, and also too much thought about what to say. The northern dialect is to just use one word, "Moin". One syllable, one word, no thought required. What could be easier.

She went on to say that there was an alternative two-word greeting. That is "moin, moin". But beware. Use that often and you might get the reputation for being too chatty.

This is actually what she said. Not something I made up.



One attraction of Rostock is the university. It was founded in 1419 and was voted (in 2018), the most beautiful university in Germany and the fourth most beautiful university in all of Europe. Wonder who is on the evaluation committee. It has students from 99 different countries and, because of this, all classes are taught in English. Also, tuition is very low. Perhaps someone from Boulder might consider Rostock.

Looking at this building, you might wonder when it was built. Turns out that all buildings in Rostock (except one) were destroyed in World War II and all have been rebuilt, mostly during the Russian (GDR) rule. But some later, after reunification.

This university was the first to issue an honorary degree to Albert Einstein and one of the only not to revoke that during the Nazi period.

Looking over the pictures of Rostock, turns out I was a bit lackadaisical. I only took six. Here are two of the most interesting ones.



I know, I know. It's a church, but also the only building that was not destroyed during WW2.

More important is:



This is the place we were taken for our German beer tasting. East German beer tastes a lot like what I remember from West Germany.

Just before we went in here, someone asked our guide, who was 21 during the reunification, what she missed and what she liked about the GDR times. Right away, she said she missed the security of knowing she would always have a job and that the state provided everything. It took her some time to reflect on what she liked after reunification. Mostly it was availability of modern products. But then she said most of those were already being sent to her by her relatives in the west. It became obvious fast that she missed the old times.

Except for the police. Many in the GDR were being watched by forces controlled by Russia and many disappeared. She did admit that she and her friends were lucky and never encountered any problems.

During the Russian occupation, ownership of all houses was assumed by the state and given (loaned) for residents to live in. After reunification, many from West Germany came to Rostock to claim what was theirs before Russia took over. And, with adequate proof, ownership was transferred back, providing problems for many locals. Even when the owners did not want to live there, they still wanted rent which was not a part of East German society.

One exception. If the prior owner was a Nazi, ownership was not restored.

There were other stories, but reunification was not simple for those in the East.

Returning from Rostock, we took a walk around our port city of Warnemunde, on the Baltic Sea. It was festival day (both here and in Rostock), a once-a-year celebration of over 100 old sailing ships. But mostly it was a reason to party. There were thousands of people in the street.

Except for one street we wandered down and came across a small house.

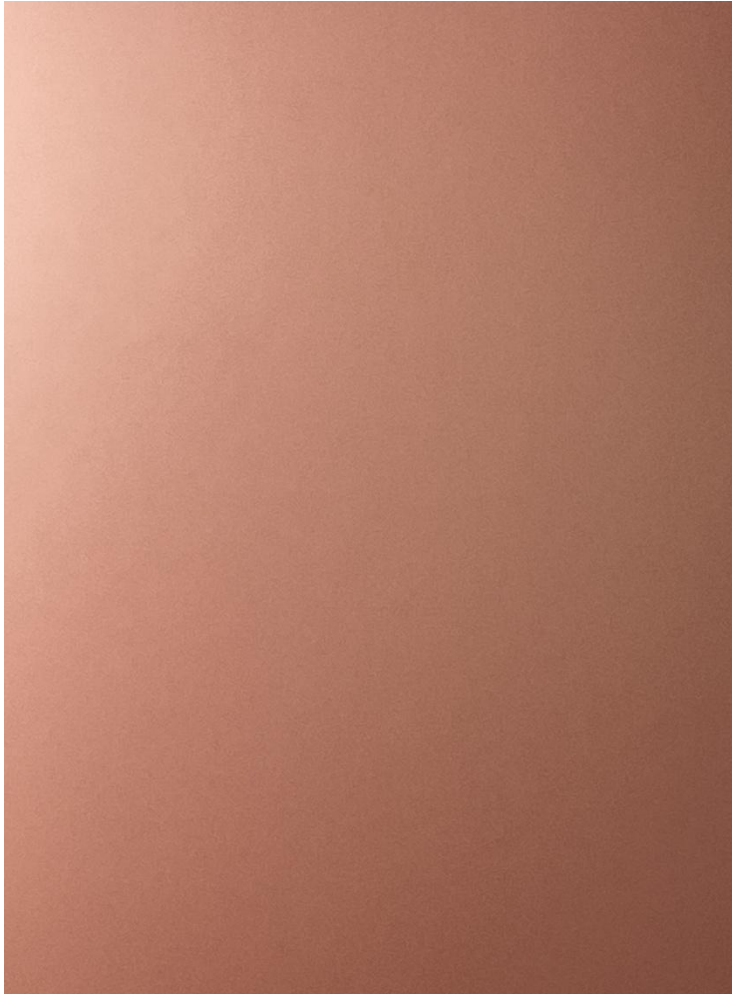


Turns out Edvard Munch, the Norwegian painter (The Scream) spent a couple of years here and the house he occupied is now a Munch museum. The curator was very friendly and talked to us quite a bit. Her English was perfect except when she tried to apologize to us that it wasn't. Vicki, as she has appropriately done before, reminded her that it was much better than out German.



Warnemunde is at the end of the river that flows to Rostock, this end being where it enters into the Baltic Sea. In the afternoon, we were able to see many of the sailboats going out to sea or returning.

As I did not take too many pictures, I'll give you the last one I took.



This is one of my thumb over the lens.