

MOVING STORIES

While packing her bags Martha's father gave her a family heirloom to take along: a horse brush, which she always carried with her thereafter. On Friday, November 30th, 1923 Martha Hüner, who until this day has never left Geestemünde, is waiting on the wharf in Bremerhaven for her departure. Just like Martha, more than 7 million emigrants left from Bremerhaven between 1830-1974 on their journey to the USA, Canada, Brazil, Argentina and Australia. From that very harbor where the emigrant ships departed you will now find the German Emigration Center, Europe's largest theme museum on the topic of emigration and immigration.

Authentic recreations and multimedia stagings place the visitors into historic times and places. The exceptional feature of the museum concept are selected authentic biographies: Visitors follow the personal path of an emigrant into an unknown future from the time of departure from his/her homeland, to the conditions experienced during the crossing up until the new start in the New World. The electronic admission ticket, the so-called "boarding pass" allows the visitor access to various biography audio stations containing the life story of the migrant and the history of his or her family, including living descendants, up through today. In addition, media stations containing information on social background and circumstances of that time can also be accessed. The focus is always on personal keepsakes of the migrants "and questions like: What do emigrants and the following generations keep from their old homeland?' or 'What is home?', explains the director of the German Emigration Center, Dr. Simone Blaschka. "On the basis of very different family stories, we convey the various reasons and motives that lead to migration. And we want to show how diverse and flexible the term migration is. Our visitors quickly realize that almost everyone can find an immigrant, refugee or displaced person among their own ancestors," says migration researcher Simone Blaschka.

In the popular "family research", museum visitors have the opportunity to search for emigrated ancestors in two international databases. This is also where the latest project of the innovative museum can be found: the "Biographies Portal" developed as part of the nationwide joint project "museum4punkt0 - Digital Strategies for the Museum of the Future". Here, guests can discover previously hidden life stories and objects from the unique museum collection in digital form or contact the museum's researchers with their own (family) migration history.

After the German Emigration Center opened its first extension in April 2012, Germany's first migration museum featured 300 years of immigration history to Germany. This topic has received a new stage in summer 2021: A second extension then opened its doors with the support of the federal government and the state of Bremen. In addition to the diverse life



stories of immigrants who moved to the German states since 1685, and a discussion of the social and societal conflicts surrounding migration, this new building accommodates the newly founded "Academy of Comparative Migration Studies" (ACOMIS), which includes an educational institute for museum education and an institute for migration research. The new building also features a new "garage museum": The exhibition area, which resembles a garage, is integrated into the façade of the museum facing the street and allows a walk-in view into the migration museum. Temporary exhibitions on current migration topics are presented here - free of charge and for everyone.

Aside from the permanent exhibition, changing special exhibitions, events and seminars in the German Emigration Center deal more closely with various aspects of migration.

The German Emigration Center opened on August 8th, 2005. Since then more than 2,8 million guests have visited the museum, which was designed and built by the Hamburg-based planning office Andreas Heller Architects & Designers. Thus the German Emigration Center is according to statistics of the Senator for Culture of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen the most visited museum in the Federal State of Bremen and ranks according to the Berlin Institute for Museum Research among the 3.4 % best visited museums in the entire Federal Republic. In May 2007 the museum was honored with the European Museum Award, the most prestigious award among the museum landscape, for "communicating history in an emotionally engaging manner by means of theatre-style staging and the academic treatment of the topic migration". Additionally, in 2008 the museum was granted The Best in Heritage Award, the same named Excellence Initiative for the preservation of historic and cultural heritage.

GERMAN EMIGRATION CENTER BREMERHAVEN

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OPENING HOURS

March through October: daily 10 am – 6 pm
November through February: daily 10 am – 5 pm
Closed on December 24th

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