

Bremerhaven, January 2026

The German Emigration Center Bremerhaven

The impressive exhibition, a unique collection on the history of migration and the striking architecture have made the German Emigration Center in Bremerhaven a place to experience, learn and reflect for 20 years.

The museum was built in 2005 at the New Harbour (Neue Hafen), from where over seven million people from Central and Eastern Europe set off overseas between 1830 and 1974, making it one of the most important emigration ports in continental Europe.

The museum is constantly evolving as it engages with science and society: two extensions were built in 2012 and 2021, which now characterize the architectural image of the Neue Hafen. Since then, the history of emigration and immigration over a period of 330 years can be seen and experienced in equal measure.

A special focus of the collection and exhibition is on family stories that document migration history: the museum's constantly growing collection comprises over 35,000 mostly personal memorabilia and over 500 eyewitness interviews from over 50 countries. In addition to impressive family stories from the collection, a variety of reconstructed historical rooms, audiovisual media, art installations and interactive hands-on stations can be seen. The digital "Critical Thinking Stations" are a special participatory offering that documents the opinions of museum visitors on socio-politically issues and processes them in real time in the form of statistics.

The exhibition tour combines multi-sensory, emotional and reflective moments. It begins at one of Bremerhaven's quays as the symbolic moment between saying goodbye to the old life and taking the decisive step onto the gangway into a new future. It follows the emigrants' tracks onto the ships, leads via Ellis Island to New York's Grand Central Station and exemplary places in the world of immigrants around 1900 in the American metropolis: a pub, a sweatshop and a deli.

Linked by the connecting bridge of “Transit”, the next part of the exhibition is dedicated to the history of immigration to Germany. The focus is on historically recurring core questions of immigration societies, which have also been debated in the Federal Republic of Germany since the 1950s. They are discussed from multiple perspectives with over 50 interviews with contemporary witnesses from society and politics. In the rest of the tour, life memories and personal memorabilia of immigrants reflect how they shaped their lives in the Federal Republic.

In addition to its permanent exhibition, the German Emigration Center explores the discourse on migration in a variety of ways: A wide range of aspects of the topic are highlighted in regular special exhibitions. As a place of exchange and learning, the institution also offers educational programs and events for children, young people and adults in the “Academy of Comparative Migration Studies” (ACOMIS) and initiates research projects. Every few years, the German Emigration Center Foundation awards the Kalliope Prize for applied migration research, which promotes outstanding projects in this field.

From January 2026, the museum will present the special exhibition **“Departures – Transformations. A Dialogue between Bremerhaven & Chemnitz,”** which emerged from a research project based at TU Chemnitz and awarded the Kalliope Prize in 2023. In addition, the German Emigration Center will take part in the Presidency of the Bundesrat held by the State of Bremen with an exhibition on migration histories from all sixteen federal states, to be shown at the Bundesrat (opening in May 2026). From June 2026 onward, the special exhibition **“Clothes Make the Man”** will explore migration through textiles and clothing.

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