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### Ocean Museum Germany

(Last updated: December 2023) In 1951, a small municipal natural history museum moved into the former St. Catherine's Monastery in Stralsund. The museum thrived and quickly developed into East Germany's internationally renowned Museum of Oceanography and Fisheries. In 1981, the travelling exhibition "Meer und Museum" brought East Germany's most visited museum to the attention of ocean enthusiasts in West Germany and Denmark.

Following German reunification, the museum was restructured as a foundation in 1994 and renamed Deutsches Meeresmuseum (Ocean Museum Germany) in 1998. A combination of oceanographic research and outreach to the general public are key to the success of the museum, which presents scientific exhibitions and aquariums at four locations as well as on its social media and online channels. The Ocean Museum Germany is one of 23 cultural beacons in Germany's eastern federal states highlighted in the so-called *Blaubuch*. It is also one of only a small number of museums worldwide exclusively devoted to the scientific study and the museum presentation of oceans.

In the 1990s, the MEERESMUSEUM in Stralsund's historical city centre was complemented by two new museum locations: The NATUREUM at Darßer Ort in the Western Pomerania Lagoon Area National Park opened its doors with exhibits about the region's coastal landscape and fauna in 1991. The NAUTINEUM on the isle of Dänholm between Stralsund and Rügen established an exhibition space for fisheries, oceanographic research, hydrography and sea waterways in 1999. The latter location also serves as a depository and has a dissection facility for scientific examinations of marine animals.

In 2008, a fourth museum location, the modern OZEANEUM, opened its doors on Stralsund's harbour island. This location features four permanent exhibitions, including the largest Baltic Sea exhibit in Europe. The OZEANEUM focuses on various aspects of the northern seas, whereas the MEERESMUSEUM highlights the diversity of tropical oceans. In 2009, the Ocean Museum Germany with its four locations ranked third in the list of Germany's most visited museums, with a total of over 1.2 million visitors.

#### One museum – four locations:

##### MEERESMUSEUM

Katharinenberg 14–20  
18439 Stralsund  
Tel.: +49 3831 2650-210  
Fax: +49 3831 2650-209

##### OZEANEUM

Hafenstraße 11  
18439 Stralsund  
Tel.: +49 3831 2650-610  
Fax: +49 3831 2650-609

##### NAUTINEUM

Kleiner Dänholm  
18439 Stralsund  
Tel.: +49 3831 2650-355

##### NATUREUM

Darßer Ort 1–3  
18375 Born  
Tel.: +49 38233 304  
Fax: +49 38233 70448

[deutsches-meeresmuseum.de/en](https://www.deutsches-meeresmuseum.de/en)

#### Directorate

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One year later, the OZEANEUM received a special honour when it was awarded the title "Europe's Museum of the Year 2010".

The last major renovation at the MEERESMUSEUM took place almost half a century ago. An area of 7,500 m<sup>2</sup> floor space at the MEERESMUSEUM is currently undergoing extensive modernisation. Scheduled for completion in summer 2024, the plans include a redesigned entrance foyer, flowing display cases, life-sized installations of marine animals, and a large aquarium featuring a tropical reef. The aquariums in the historical vaulted cellar of the monastery are being completely overhauled so that visitors can once again embark on a journey through the tropical seas. After completion of the modernisation, popular exhibits, including the Marlene the leatherback turtle and the famous fin whale skeleton in the choir of the former church, will once again be available for viewing. The sea turtles will also return to the stage - swimming and feeding in their 350,000-litre aquarium. All areas of the museum will have access for individuals with limited mobility.

In addition to presenting public exhibitions, the museum's key tasks include collecting, preserving and researching. The dedicated curators and scientific staff manage growing collections, preserve new specimens and conduct cutting-edge research. The museum's skeleton collection, for example, is an invaluable record of endemic and transient small whales species in the Baltic Sea. Thousands of preserved fish, crabs, birds and shells are indispensable for scientific research.

Until 1989, new specimens were primarily collected by the crew of East Germany's fishing and merchant fleet. Collecting trips to the Red Sea in 1976 and 1979 added more than 6,000 specimens to the museum's collection and made the construction of a unique, life-like tropical coral reef display at the MEERESMUSEUM possible. More recently, the museum has been involved in scientific expeditions to the Mediterranean, Taiwan, Sudan, the Maldives, Antarctica and to the deep-sea corals off the Norwegian coast.

In 1980, the Ocean Museum Germany launched an initiative to register all dead stranded marine mammals along the German Baltic Sea coast, with a special focus on grey seals and harbour porpoises. The findings that now span over 40 years

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allow scientists to learn more about the species' distributions. In addition to dead finds, the museum registers marine mammal sightings by watersports enthusiasts in the Baltic Sea via an app. The Ocean Museum Germany is also a leader in the development and use of acoustic measuring devices for harbour porpoise vocalizations in the Baltic Sea. These diverse lines of research help scientists at the museum compile data that are essential to adequately protect marine mammals in the Baltic Sea.

Scientists at the Ocean Museum Germany are also successfully investigating evolutionary relationships among fish species and regularly publishing papers about undescribed fish species.

Many years of experience and impeccable specimen preparation by the in-house taxidermy department are prerequisites for many of the museum's unique exhibits, including the whale skeletons in the foyer of the OZEANEUM.

Science public relations is the central task of the Ocean Museum Germany and takes place via exhibitions and aquariums and well as through panel discussions, collaborations and events for adults, families with children and school classes. The museum is active in numerous associations, including the German Marine Research Consortium (KDM), the German Marine Research Alliance (DAM), the European Cetacean Society (ECS), the European Association of Aquarium Curators (EUAC), the German Museums Association and the International Council of Museums (ICOM).

On 01.01.2019, the Ocean Museum Germany Foundation became operator of the OZEANEUM (previously an independent, non-profit GmbH). Unlike most museums in Germany, the Ocean Museum Germany is now more than 80% self-financed. Additional funding comes from the Hanseatic city of Stralsund, the state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and the German federal government. The Hanseatic city of Stralsund and the Friends of the Ocean Museum Germany (established in 1991) are the two founders of the Ocean Museum Germany - northern Germany's most visited museum.

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