
GERMANY KICKS OFF REUNIFICATION CELEBRATIONS IN MAINZ

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The 27th anniversary of German reunification is being celebrated in cities across the country. Chancellor Angela Merkel will take part in this year's main event in Mainz under the motto: "Together we are Germany."

The city of Mainz took center stage on Tuesday as the host of the main celebrations for this year's Day of German Unity.

Around 500,000 guests are expected to take part in the festival to celebrate the 27th anniversary of Germany's peaceful reunification.

With security concerns in Germany still running high, a total of 4,300 police officers have been deployed in Mainz alone for Tuesday.

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German Chancellor Angela Merkel, President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, and German parliament President Norbert Lammert attended an ecumenical service in the Mainz cathedral. Steinmeier is also due to give a speech later in the day at a ceremony in the Rheingoldhalle convention center.

Under the motto "Together we are Germany," each of Germany's 16 states were on display at a festival near the banks of the Rhine River, including a large replica of Berlin's Brandenburg gate.

Later in the afternoon, festival-goers will gather together to take part in a new national holiday tradition by singing a round of Ludwig van Beethoven's "Ode to Joy."

Celebrations began on Monday with several concerts including performances from German pop star Tim Bendzko and eastern German rock band Karat.

As part of Germany's national holiday, 1,000 mosques around the country have also opened up their doors to visitors – including a mosque in Cologne belonging to Germany's largest Islamic organization, DITIB.

rs/rc (AFP, dpa, epd)

A Berlin monument with history