



The alternate Düsseldorf

Just 90-minutes from Frankfurt is the edgy city of Düsseldorf. Apart from being Germany's richest city, the nation's advertising and fashion capital (where Claudia Schiffer was discovered), and the hub of many corporations and banks, it's also a city of eclectic art—ultimates and extremes, a sensational mix of glass, chrome and ancient bricks.

By Cindy-Lou Dale



Radical architecture dominates the Media Harbor where, instead of warehouses and silos, stand bold art installations designed by world-renowned Canadian-born Frank Gehry. Their warped facades, not dissimilar to the surrealist art of Salvador Dali, capture the imagination: the two most eye-catching buildings being Roggendorf-Haus, with its outrageous plastic figures climbing up the exterior and a chrome office block which glistens when the sun reflects off its metal surfaces. Yet it all blends seamlessly with the surrounding Rococo and Baroque architecture.

and designers moved into the area because of cheap rents; then came stylish investors. This has resulted in an eclectic interwoven mix of designer labels like Wunderwerk and Tina Miyake, high-end apartment blocks, second-hand boutiques like Elementarteilchen, MyOwnBike selling single-gear bicycles and for imported coffee and homemade cake, there's Rekord.

DRINK

A visit to Fuchschen Brewery (Altstadt) needs to top your must-do list. On Mondays, a few of the local old boys meet up in the "Liar's Corner" to drink good beer and exchange yarns. A tradition they've upheld for +45 years.

For a typical pub experience, check out Kreuzherrneek's extensive Schnapps collection.

If Jagermeister is your thing, then you'll love Killepitsch—the holistic way to get hammered. It's a thick somewhat sweet, all natural liquor which contains 98 herbs, berries and fruit and is distilled into a tow curling 42 percent alcohol. The best place to enjoy Killepitsch is at Et Kabuffke, an authentic small pub in Altstadt.



SHOP

In downtown Düsseldorf is the elegant Königsallee Boulevard, a thoroughfare divided by a moat with a lush park in the center. It's where money is made. On one side of the boulevard are banks and businesses and across from them are flagship haute couture boutiques.

For a trendy shopping experience visit the hipster walk of Lorettostrasse. Start at Bilker Church with Fromagerie for the best cheese in town, continue with creative stores like Sabas, Tuxedo and Uwe van Afferden, high-end deli's like Bernstein & Inbar, wine groceries like the Bilker Weinhaus and finish at the local branded fashion label of Null:Zwo:Elf where you can buy ethnic souvenirs. Lose yourself in Wandel Antik, a huge warehouse for antique furniture and vintage designs. Should you get hungry, try out the yummy pizza on the terrace of Menta or have homemade everything at FRL Buntentbach. Even their egg warmers are croqueted! If you're into the deep fried snacks of Dutch cuisine, head to Leo's Grill.

Wait for a warm day and take yourself down to the food wagon near Oberkasseler Bridge for bratwurst or currywurst, get a beer and pull up a bench. The view of the Rhine and the Altstadt is terrific and gets better with each sip.

Ratingerstrasse is the cradle of the Düsseldorf punk movement. Even now, this street is still seen as more alternative than Altstadt. Every Wednesday evening Ratingerstrasse mutates into a meeting point for all after-work party people. Check out the pub Zum Goldenen Einhorn.

When you drink Altbeer in one of the local breweries, the waiters replace your empty glass with a full one without asking. What may seem welcoming at first could become a problem when you get the bill. Put a beer coaster on top of your glass to let them know you're done.

Although Germany is a true beer nation, beer is not as cheap as one might think. Luckily an unlimited number of little kiosks called "Budchen" or "Trinkhalle" are scattered all over Dusseldorf and sell cold beer from €1.20.

EAT OUT

Neighboring Altstadt, near the Hofgarten, is Patisserie Passion which, if you're a chocoholic, is heaven. Here the glass cabinets

display gold pralines, chocolate torte and a selection of cakes and pastries to die for!

Zum Schiffchen (Altstadt) is another must-visit. It's the city's oldest restaurant where Napoleon himself is said to have dined. The history-steeped premises are smarter than other brewery pubs and the food is good too.

Bar Cherie, a cozy French-style café is one of the first choices of young Düsseldorfers for their first date. Try their fabulous tarte flambé.

If you get the late night munchies and you're not into a kebab or pizza, try out Düsseldorf's answer to the burger—the famous Schweinebrötchen, a bread roll with two slices of juicy grilled pork. For the late-night gourmet, Ham Ham Bei Josef is highly recommended.



EAT IN

Since the 1700s, Düsseldorf is famous for its mustard. Senfladen is a small Altstadt mustard shop that sells its wares in small stone pots with the company's initials "ABB" inscribed in blue on the side. Van Gogh so liked the mustard he included a depiction of it in one of his paintings.

Then there's the bread, which Germans value more than beer. And it doesn't get much better than Hinkel, a family-run bakery for more than a century. Hinkel is a bustling carb-paradise stacked with artisan bread, pastries, cookies and cakes.

To find something to put on your Hinkel bread, take a wander around the undercover gourmet food stalls at Carlsplatz Market (established nearly six centuries ago).

QUIRKY STUFF

For murals and street art, visit the alternative neighborhood of Kiefernstrasse. House number 23 is the only remaining punk club in Düsseldorf, the notorious AK47.

Beneath the promenade, in one of the underground road tunnels, is KIT Kunst im Tunnel—an

alternative art exhibition. Enter through the bar at ground level (great views of the Rhine), then take an elevator into the tunnel.

GETTING AROUND:

To get to the city from Düsseldorf Airport take a 12-minute train journey (€2.50).

A Düsseldorf Card gets you free public transport, museum entrance and city tours: €9 for 24 hours.

See Düsseldorf Tourism to plan your trip www.duesseldorf-tourismus.de.

WHERE TO STAY:

Düsseldorf City Hostel, Europe's most modern hostel, is located along the Rhine, just a few minutes' walk from Altstadt. The amenities are comfortable and innovative and all rooms have en-suite facilities. All rooms have private bathrooms. And rates start at €24.40pp incl. breakfast.

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Düsseldorf is an alternative dream come true. See you there!

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