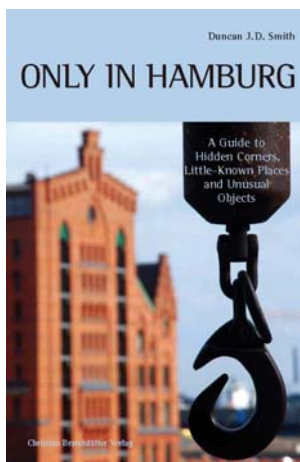


ONLY IN HAMBURG – A Guide to Hidden Corners, Little-known Places and Unusual Objects

“There is a great contrast between the silent town of Hannover, the quiet and almost deserted sands of Lüneburg, and the crowds, the activity, and the bustle of Hamburg...they appear extraordinary to an inhabitant of Hannover, when he visits Hamburg for the first time.

Travels in the North of Germany, Thomas Hodgskin (1820)

Straddling the mighty River Elbe, as well tributaries the Alster and the Bille, Hamburg is Germany’s greenest and second-largest city. It is also the most populous non-capital city in the European Union – and one of its best kept secrets.



Hamburg’s official name is the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg (*Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg*), which makes reference to it having been a (Customs) Free Imperial City under the Holy Roman Empire of Barbarossa (1155-1190)*, and a member of the Hanseatic League during the Late Middle Ages. Both helped transform Hamburg into one of the most important ports in northern Europe, a designation it retains to this day despite having been damaged severely by fire and war.

Hamburg’s riverine geography and maritime history is all pervading, prompting many of the recommendations proffered by today’s guidebooks. The undemanding visitor thus gains easy access to a broad array of museums, galleries, restaurants, and noteworthy buildings, reflecting the history of the city from the time of its founding by Charlemagne up until its transformation into one of the 16 member states (*Bundesländer*) of the Federal Republic of Germany.

However, there is far more to Hamburg than meets the eye, and it is for those wishing to discover something more of the place for themselves that this guidebook has been written. It only takes a few minutes of planning, and a glance at a decent street map, to escape the crowds and the orchestrated tours and discover a very different Hamburg. Based on personal experience walking through the city’s seven boroughs (*Bezirke*) the author will point the explorer in a new and unusual direction. This is the Hamburg of prehistoric remains and little-known gardens; abandoned ice cellars and converted factories; quirky museums and intriguing places of worship; Oriental tea houses and unusual shops; hidden lighthouses and strange ships; not to mention an abandoned pneumatic postal system and a Cold War-era radiation-proof shelter, the remains of which can now be visited. Hamburg is also a city with a turbulent past, its poignant Jewish history and numerous memorials to the victims of Nazi aggression still bearing grim witness to terrible times.

As might be expected, many of these unusual historic locations are located in Hamburg's former walled town (Altstadt and Neustadt), which lies either side of the Alster Canal, at the heart of Hamburg-Mitte; it was here, where the Alster joins the Elbe, that the history of Hamburg began. This central borough stretches the full width of the city and includes leafy St. Georg, notorious St. Pauli, and the rapidly developing Hafencity. South of the Elbe, Hamburg-Mitte incorporates fascinating dockland areas such as Finkenwerder, Rothenburgsort, and Wilhelmsburg. A similar number of locations, however, lie *outside* these well-trodden areas, especially north of the Elbe, in the affluent boroughs of Altona and Eimsbüttel to the northwest, and the working class boroughs of Hamburg-Nord and Wandsbek to the northeast. Further hidden corners await discovery in the predominantly rural southern boroughs of Harburg and Bergedorf.

Using Hamburg's extensive transport network of regional trains (*Regionalbahn*), underground and elevated trains (*U-Bahn/Hochbahn*), suburban trains (*S-Bahn*), buses (*MetroBus/Autobus*), and ferries, the explorer can quickly reach all the locations described – and that's without detracting whatsoever from the sense of personal discovery that each of these places has to offer. Indeed, directions have been kept to a minimum so as to leave the visitor free to find their own particular path. Whether searching for remnants of Charlemagne's Hammaburg, tracking down what's left of Hitler's U-Boat bases, visiting a Hindu temple in the suburbs, marvelling at how a ship can be put inside a bottle, or exploring Hamburg's North Sea outpost of Neuwerk, it is hoped that the visitor will experience a sense of having made the discovery for themselves.

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