

When in Cologne, do as the Cologners do

If you are heading to IDS, do yourself a favour and plan at least a few hours outside of the Koelnmesse fairgrounds. After all, Cologne is one of Germany's most superlative cities and is overflowing with architecture, gastronomy, art and rambunctiousness. Read on for tips on how to enjoy Cologne like a local.



■ At nearly 2,000 years of age, the former Roman city has not tired of bearing fruits, the long list of which includes the world's tallest cathedral, an eponymous perfume marketed to men and a pioneering electronic music scene that dates back to the 1950s. Readers really should consider exploring this bastion of contemporary German society, and a taste of what Cologne has to offer may leave you with a thirst for more.

might have softened over time. Fortunately, the Deutsche Bahn's assessment of the locks in 2015 concluded that they posed no structural danger to the bridge.

A short ride west will bring you to the expansive, parklike Melaten cemetery, home to the remains of many notable Cologners—including Johann Maria Farina, who invented eau de cologne; Alfred Nourney, who survived the sinking of the Titanic;

cake at *cafecafe ehrenfeld*, where the breakfast menu is also recommended.

If you are longing for a holiday feel and find yourself in the southern part of the inner city, enjoy small Spanish delicacies and an excellent cappuccino surrounded by surfboards hanging on the walls at *Café Mansito* (formerly *Sabor 'ermoso*).

Cologne by night

As the sun goes down, Cologne reawakens in a different light, and so it is easy to enjoy the city once the trade fair halls close. Keep an eye out for the plentiful shisha bars and *Büdchen*, refreshment kiosks found on many street corners. Many locals will stop by one of them for drink, so why not join them? When it comes to bars, the trendy *Zumscheuen Reh*, located next to the Köln West train station, is perfect for starting the evening: get to know some Cologners while enjoying a couple of long drinks—non-alcoholic drinks are also plentiful—and the live music on offer in the bar's outdoor area.

Another idea would be to hit *Bumann & SOHN*, which is close to the Köln-Ehrenfeld train station. It is here that beer garden atmosphere meets urban industrial vibes and where the dynamic, alternative flair of this district can be felt best. Coming early pays off!

Those who are looking for a home away from home might consider stumbling by *die Wohngemeinschaft*, which means "shared flat". This café, bar, theatre and hostel is located in the trendy *Belgisches Viertel* shopping district and arranged according to the tastes and whims of its four fictitious housemates. A drink on a retro barstool in this friendly establishment may be just the ticket.

If you are in the mood for dancing, you can spend the rest of the night in the northern part of Cologne between Ehrenfeld and Nippes, at the *Odonien* nightclub to be exact. Apart from concerts, plays, flea markets and open-air film showings, at *Odonien* you can dance to predominantly electronic club music in the midst of obscure metal sculptures and impressive fireworks.

Arts and culture

Cologne has a great deal to offer as far as arts and culture are concerned. Collections of famous European paintings can be found in the celebrated *Museum Ludwig*—this might

be your thing; however, a few other exhibitions that are happening around town may prove to be more topical. On show at the Museum of Applied Arts is *Blumen, Flowers, Fleurs*, an exhibition of iridescent, larger-than-life woollen "paintings" by the German artist *Susanna Taras*. The artist plays with colour, scale and form and aims to find a sense of poetry in the halls of art institutions.

A hop, skip and a jump away is the city's leading ethnological museum, the *Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, Cultures of the World*. Fresher than its name might suggest, the museum is currently asking visitors what love has to do with colonialism. The exhibition *LOVE?* explores love and desire as experienced under the great hegemonies of our age: namely heteropatriarchy, colonialism and capitalism. If you are up for a challenge during your time in Cologne, make it this exhibition. It could allow you to see your own local museum collection in a new light.

There are many, many more museums of note in the city: *Museum Schnütgen*, the *Wallraf-Richartz Museum*, the *Museum for East Asian Art*, just to name a few.

Film buffs should pay a visit to the *Filmforum NRW*, and one of many other highlights of the city for cineastes is the *ODEON*, a cosy, retro-style movie theatre that shows art house productions.

Food and drinks

Whether you are interested in music, art or getting lost in the crowd, Cologne and its peculiarities are best explored with a full tummy. For quite some time now, an unofficial institution of the city has been the *falafel*.

Usually, it is freshly made with coriander or parsley (either Lebanese- or Syrian-style) and fried to perfection. In Cologne, these spicy chickpea balls taste like nowhere else in Germany—preferably with a giant spoonful of tahini. Try it yourself: take a stroll down *Venloer Street* in Ehrenfeld and see for how long you can resist the smell of the various oriental bistros and cafes. Arguably the best *falafel* can be found at the three eateries *Vegan Food Revolution*, *Habibi* and *Beirut*. The first is known for its doughnut-shaped *falafel* and the last boasts a beautiful view over the Rhine.

If your tastes are more carnivorous, however, then you should pay *Karl Hermann's* a visit. Also located on *Venloer Street*, it serves high-quality burgers with freshly minced and succulently grilled meat patties—free from antibiotics—in a fluffy brioche bun. If you still have some room left afterwards, you can hit *Frittenwerk Köln* for some delicious homemade fries. Enjoy fries made from regular or sweet potatoes with chive and cheese topping. Whatever you choose, make sure to also try the *lemon aioli* and the *guacamole*.

Naturally, these large amounts of salt need to be counteracted somehow, which is why a visit to one of the Kölsch-serving traditional restaurants is a necessity. Enjoy a chilled Kölsch beer like a true local at *Bierhaus en d'r Salzgass* or *Weinhaus Vogel*, where not only is simple, authentic Cologne food served, but the spirit of the city can be experienced.

Find out more about the places mentioned in this article by typing their names in Google or TripAdvisor. All details were current at the time of writing in late January. ◀



Fig. 1: Cologne's old town is full of contrasts and colour, all year round.

Cologne by day

The undisputable reference point of this city is the famous Cologne Cathedral, or *Kölner Dom*. The Catholic church took 632 years to build and is Germany's most visited landmark. If you head inside, keep an eye out for *Gerhard Richter's* brazen stained-glass window (they consist of 11,500 identically sized pieces of coloured glass) and try to imagine the church's largest bell suspended high above you. Affectionately known as "*Der dicke Pitter*", or "the Fat or Big Peter", it weighs around 24,000kg and is the world's second largest freely swinging, ringable bell. The richness of its toll only rings out on special occasions, such as the death of a pope, and Christian celebrations. Like most locals, you may prefer to simply chill on the steps and watch the crowd, take a selfie in front of the towering gothic façade and head off. Rest assured that Cologne has much more to offer!

Just east of the cathedral is the *Hohenzollern Bridge*, whose pedestrian pathway is bejewelled by an estimated 500,000 love padlocks. A trip to IDS could be the perfect chance to tell that special someone just how you feel or to reaffirm in steel what

and *Irmgard Keun*, a writer whose books were burned by the Nazis but later celebrated for their portrayals of the lives of women.

Not many Cologners take city tours, but doing so could help you get to know the town from a new, different perspective. How about heading back to the cemetery for an interactive mystery tour, discovering the hidden, hoppy laneways of the historic centre with a guided brewery tour, or exploring the queer side of town by taking an LGBTQ+ tour? Perhaps you are more interested in obscure topics, like the role that mustard has played in the town or whether Cologners really are obsessed with chocolate. The town's many speciality museums may answer these questions while posing many others.

What better way to take a break from the show than by enjoying a piece of cake and a cup of coffee? The vibrant *Ehrenfeld* district (northwest of the inner city) offers a number of good cafes in a relaxed and appealing atmosphere. Visit the cosy and slightly hidden *Kaffeebud Ehrenfeld* to find out what a "third wave" coffee is, or delight in a creamy latte and authentic New York-style cheese-

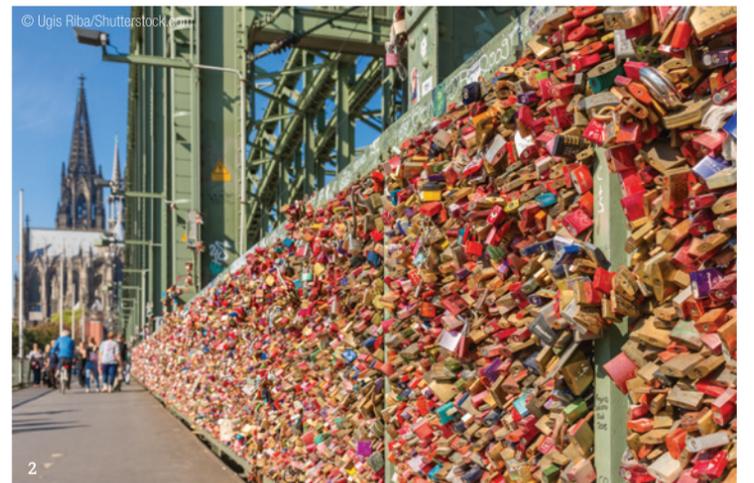


Fig. 2: Just east of the cathedral is the Hohenzollern Bridge, which survived allied bombing raids during World War II and is now bejewelled by an estimated 500,000 love padlocks.