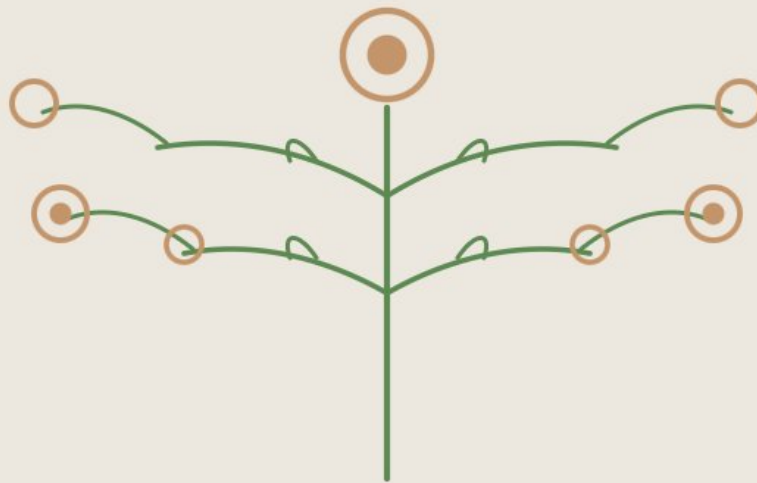




48 HOURS IN

Hamburg

BLOOM WHERE YOU WANDER

Welcome to Hamburg.

Hamburg is the most underrated major city in Germany. Berlin gets the reputation for cool; Munich gets the reputation for tradition. Hamburg, which is richer than both, gets on with it — Europe's second-largest port city, a music scene that launched the Beatles, a harbor quarter so successful that the city built an entire new neighborhood on top of it, and a fish market that has been running since 1703. The Speicherstadt warehouse district is UNESCO-listed and genuinely extraordinary. The Elbphilharmonie on the waterfront is the finest concert hall in Germany and one of the most remarkable buildings completed this century. Two days here will change your opinion of what a German city can be.

How to Use This Guide

- Read through once before you land — get the shape of both days in mind.
- Day 1 covers the Speicherstadt, the HafenCity, and the Elbphilharmonie.
- Day 2 moves to Altona, the fish market, Blankenese, and Sternschanze.
- Book the Elbphilharmonie Plaza before you arrive — it fills daily.
- The fish market runs every Sunday morning from 5am. Plan accordingly.

Essential Quick Facts

Currency	Euro (€). Cards widely accepted everywhere.
Transport	HVV metro (U-Bahn/S-Bahn) covers the city. Hamburg Card gives unlimited travel + museum discounts.
Weather	Maritime climate. Mild, overcast, and wet much of the year. A waterproof layer is always correct.
Time Zone	CET (UTC+1) winter · CEST (UTC+2) summer.
Emergency	112 for all emergencies.
Tipping	Round up or leave 10%. Service is not automatically included.

DAY ONE

Speicherstadt · HafenCity · Elbphilharmonie

Day One stays close to the water — Hamburg's defining element. The Speicherstadt warehouse district, the newest neighborhood in Germany built on the reclaimed harbor, and the concert hall that changed the city's relationship with its own waterfront.

MORNING 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM**9:00 AM**

Speicherstadt — Warehouse District

The world's largest warehouse complex, built between 1883 and 1927 on a series of islands in the Elbe delta, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The brick Gothic warehouses stretch for 1.5 kilometres along both sides of the Fleet canals — the best way to see them is to walk the bridges between the islands and look at the facades from water level. The Miniatur Wunderland, the world's largest model railway exhibition, is here (book tickets at [miniatur-wunderland.com](https://www.miniatur-wunderland.com) weeks ahead).

Insider tip: The Speicherstadt is best in the early morning and evening when the waterway reflections are strongest. The warehouses were originally used for coffee, spices, tea, and Oriental carpets — the merchandise is still identifiable from the different ventilation systems on each building.

10:30 AM

HafenCity

Europe's largest inner-city urban development project — a new neighborhood built on 157 hectares of reclaimed port land directly adjacent to the Speicherstadt. The architecture ranges from mediocre to excellent; the public spaces along the harbor waterfront are consistently good. The Überseequartier at the district's western end is the commercial core. The most interesting walk is along the promenade facing the Elbe.

Insider tip: HafenCity was planned from 2000 and is still under active development. The contrast with the Victorian Speicherstadt immediately adjacent makes both more interesting. The Elbphilharmonie is on the western tip of the district.

11:30 AM

Elbphilharmonie

The most significant new building in Germany this century — Herzog & de Meuron's glass wave structure on top of a 1960s brick warehouse, completed in 2017 after a decade of construction delays and cost overruns that made it internationally famous. The Plaza level (the public viewing deck at 37 metres) is free with a time-slot ticket from the box office or online at [elbphilharmonie.de](https://www.elbphilharmonie.de). The views over the harbor and the city are the finest elevated perspective in Hamburg.

Insider tip: Book the Plaza time slot online in advance — it fills daily, particularly at weekends. The Grand Hall acoustics are extraordinary; attend a concert if you can. The building makes more sense from the inside than any photograph suggests.

AFTERNOON 1:00 PM - 6:00 PM**1:00 PM****Lunch near the Speicherstadt**

The Speicherstadt and HafenCity have a growing restaurant scene. Fleetschlösschen on Brooktorkai for a reliable German lunch in a canal-side setting. Or walk to the Neustadt for better options at lower prices — the streets around Gänsemarkt and the Binnenalster have the best concentration of lunch spots in the central city.

Insider tip: The Laeishalle concert hall on Johannes-Brahms-Platz is worth a brief look on the way — the 1908 Neo-Renaissance building is Hamburg's other concert hall and gives context for why the Elbphilharmonie was so transformative.

2:30 PM**Binnenalster & Alster Lakes**

Hamburg's inner lake, the Binnenalster, sits in the middle of the city — a 180-hectare body of water surrounded by the city's finest commercial architecture. The Jungfernstieg promenade along its south bank is Hamburg's main pedestrian street. Walk around the lake or take one of the Alster ferries. The Außenalster (outer lake) beyond the rail bridges is quieter and larger — the most pleasant afternoon walk in Hamburg follows its western bank.

Insider tip: The Alster ferries run scheduled services on both lakes and are covered by the HVV Hamburg Card. The route from Jungfernstieg to Winterhude covers the full outer lake and takes forty minutes — one of the most pleasant public transport journeys in Germany.

4:00 PM**St. Pauli & Reeperbahn**

Walk west to St. Pauli — the former entertainment and red-light district that now operates as Hamburg's most concentrated nightlife area. The Reeperbahn is the main street; the Große Freiheit is where the Beatles played their 1960–1962 Hamburg residency in the Star-Club and the Indra. The Beatlemania is real — a plaque marks the Indra, the clubs are mostly gone, but the street is unchanged in its general character.

Insider tip: The Kaiserkeller on Große Freiheit 36 is where the Beatles played 106 nights in 1960. The building is still there. The Indra at number 64 has the original Hamburg Beatles plaque. Neither requires a ticket — they are street-level history.

EVENING 7:30 PM - LATE**7:30 PM****Dinner in Altona or the Schanzenviertel**

Altona on the Elbe is Hamburg's most established food neighborhood — the Fischmarkt area around Große Elbstraße has the best fish restaurants in the city. The Schanzenviertel (Sternschanze) is the most interesting neighborhood for an evening: independent restaurants, bars, and the kind of street life that Hamburg keeps for itself. Zum Wohl on Schulterblatt for a natural wine bar that has been one of the best in Hamburg for years.

Insider tip: The Schanzenviertel is the neighborhood that feels most like Hamburg at street level. The streets around Schulterblatt, Max-Brauer-Allee, and the Marktstraße have the best density of independent bars and restaurants in the city.

DAY TWO

Fish Market · Blankenese · Kunsthalle

Day Two starts at dawn if you're visiting on a Sunday, moves west along the Elbe to Hamburg's most extraordinary residential landscape, and ends in one of the finest art museums in Germany.

MORNING (5:00 AM OR 9:00 AM)**5:00 AM****Altona Fish Market (Sunday only)**

The Altona Fish Market has been running since 1703 and operates every Sunday morning from 5am to 9:30am. It is simultaneously a working wholesale fish market, a street food market, a flea market, and a continuation of the previous night's St. Pauli nightlife — the market hall is full of people who haven't slept, eating fish sandwiches and listening to a live band. One of the most genuinely strange and wonderful experiences Hamburg offers. Non-Sunday visitors start at 9am instead.

Insider tip: The market's greatest spectacle is the fish vendors — each one performing an elaborate theatrical auction for their catch, throwing fish to other vendors across the crowd, competing for the most dramatic exit. Arrive before 7am on Sunday for the full experience. The Fischauktionshalle (Fish Auction Hall) opens at 7am for breakfast.

9:00 AM**Blankenese — The Treppenviertel**

Take the S-Bahn or river ferry west along the Elbe to Blankenese — Hamburg's most extraordinary residential neighborhood, built on a steep hillside descending to the Elbe with 5,000 steps connecting the streets. The Treppenviertel (staircase quarter) is a labyrinth of narrow stepped lanes between nineteenth-century villas and cottage gardens, with views over the Elbe at every turn. Allow two hours.

Insider tip: The S1 S-Bahn to Blankenese takes 30 minutes from Hamburg Hauptbahnhof. The HADAG ferry from Landungsbrücken takes 45 minutes and gives the better approach — arriving by water at the small pier below the hill. Walk up through the Treppenviertel, have a coffee at the top, and take the S-Bahn back.

12:00 PM**Hamburger Kunsthalle**

One of the finest and largest art museums in Germany — the collection runs from medieval altarpieces to contemporary video art across three connected buildings spanning four centuries of architectural history. Caspar David Friedrich, the Hamburg Romantics, and one of the best collections of German Expressionism in existence. Allow two hours minimum.

Insider tip: The Kunsthalle is in three buildings spanning 1869 to 1997. Start in the oldest building for the Friedrich and Romantic collections, then move through the gallery of 19th-century painting, and end in the Galerie der Gegenwart for the contemporary collection. Free on the first Thursday evening of the month.

AFTERNOON 1:00 PM - 6:00 PM**1:00 PM****Lunch in the Altstadt or Neustadt**

The area around the Kunsthalle and the Hauptbahnhof has good options at every price point. Or walk to the Neustadt — the Gänsemarkt area has the most concentrated lunch options in the central city. Zum Franziskaner on Mönckebergstraße for a traditional German lunch; the Markthalle on Klosterwall for a covered market with multiple food stalls.

Insider tip: The Markthalle Hamburg on Klosterwall is the best option if you want flexibility — twelve food stalls covering everything from Vietnamese to fresh pasta, with a central bar. Open for lunch daily.

2:30 PM**Chilehaus & the Kontorhaus District**

Walk south from the Kunsthalle into the Kontorhaus district — a collection of expressionist brick commercial buildings from the 1920s, also UNESCO-listed. The Chilehaus (1924) is the centerpiece: a ten-story block shaped like the prow of a ship, its curved corner narrowing to a literal point. The Sprinkenhof and the Meißberghof flank it. These are working office buildings — walk through the entrance halls during business hours.

Insider tip: The Chilehaus was built by Henry Sloman, a Hamburg merchant who made his fortune in Chilean saltpeter. The ship-prow form is deliberate — Sloman wanted the building to represent his maritime business. The entrance hall is open to the public and worth ten minutes.

4:30 PM**St. Michaeliskirche**

Hamburg's most significant Baroque church — the Michel, as it's known, has been the city's landmark building since 1762 and its tower is visible from the harbor. The interior is the finest Baroque space in northern Germany: white plaster, gold ornament, and the largest Baroque church organ in Germany. Climb the tower for the harbor view. The crypt contains the graves of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach and the Baroque architect Ernst Georg Sonnin.

Insider tip: The tower climb gives the clearest view of the harbor and the Elbe that is available from land. The platform at 82 metres has a 360° panorama. Open daily; allow thirty minutes for the climb and the view.

EVENING 7:30 PM - LATE**7:30 PM****Final Dinner**

The Schanzenviertel for the evening — the most reliably good neighborhood for dinner in Hamburg. Clouds on the 23rd floor of the Empire Riverside Hotel for the finest harbor view available over a dinner table. Bullerei in the Schanzenviertel for Tim Mälzer's German brasserie cooking in a converted slaughterhouse. Or Nil on Neuer Pferdemarkt for contemporary German cuisine in a room that has been one of the best in Hamburg for two decades.

Insider tip: Clouds at the Empire Riverside Hotel requires advance booking but offers the single most dramatic harbor view in the city over a reliable international menu. Best for a special last evening. The Bullerei is more casual and more characterful — the converted slaughterhouse setting is extraordinary.

WHERE TO EAT

The No-Tourist-Trap Food Guide

Prices per person, excl. drinks. Hamburg eats fish seriously.

BREAKFAST & COFFEE**Elbgold Coffee**

€3–7

Schanzenviertel & multiple

Hamburg's benchmark specialty roaster. The Schanzenviertel original is the best location. Serious brewing, knowledgeable staff.

Café Paris

€6–14

Rathausstraße, Altstadt

Parisian-style brasserie with one of the best breakfast menus in the city. Beautiful Art Nouveau interior. Worth sitting down for.

Fischauktionshalle

€5–12

Altona Fish Market, Sunday 7–9:30am

The Fish Auction Hall at the Altona market serves fish sandwiches, Labskaus, and beer from 7am on Sundays. The most Hamburg breakfast available.

LUNCH**Fischereihafen-Restaurant**

€25–45

Große Elbstraße 143, Altona

The finest fish restaurant in Hamburg. Elbe eel, North Sea plaice, and the best fish soup in the city. Views over the working harbor. Book ahead.

Markthalle Hamburg

€10–18

Klosterwall 9–21

Covered food market with twelve stalls. Vietnamese, pasta, meat — the best flexible lunch option in the central city.

Nil

€20–35

Neuer Pferdemarkt 5, Schanzenviertel

Contemporary German cooking, one of the most consistent kitchens in Hamburg for two decades. Bar available. Walk-in friendly at lunch.

DINNER**Bullerei**

€35–55

Lagerstraße 34b, Schanzenviertel

Tim Mälzer's converted slaughterhouse. German brasserie cooking in the most characterful room in Hamburg. Book ahead.

Clouds

€45–65

David-Straße 1, St. Pauli

23rd floor of the Empire Riverside Hotel. The finest harbor view over a dinner table. International menu. Book well ahead.

Zum Wohl

€6–14

[Schulterblatt 57, Schanzenviertel](#)

Natural wine bar that has been one of the best in Hamburg for years. Small plates, excellent selection. No reservations.

Zum Franziskaner

€18–28

[Mönckebergstraße 3](#)

Traditional German cooking in the central city — pork knuckle, Labskaus, local beer. Reliable and unpretentious.

BARS & LATE NIGHT**Zum Wohl**

€5–12

[Schulterblatt 57, Schanzenviertel](#)

Natural wine bar. The best wine program in the Schanzenviertel. No music, no pretension.

Bar Centrale

€8–14

[Clemens-Schultz-Straße, St. Pauli](#)

Italian-inflected cocktail bar in St. Pauli. One of the more considered bar programs in the city.

Freiheit 26

€5–10

[Große Freiheit 26, St. Pauli](#)

Live music on the street where the Beatles played. The most historically charged bar address in Hamburg.

Altes Mädchen

€4–8

[Lagerstraße 28b, Schanzenviertel](#)

Craft beer bar attached to the Ratsherrn brewery. The most serious beer program in Hamburg. Good food.

The Labskaus Note

Labskaus is Hamburg's traditional sailor dish: corned beef, potatoes, beetroot, herring, and a fried egg. Order it once.

NAVIGATING HAMBURG

U-Bahn, S-Bahn & the Alster Ferries

Hamburg's HVV network is one of the best in Germany — U-Bahn, S-Bahn, buses, and the Alster ferries all run on the same ticket system. The Hamburg Card gives unlimited travel plus museum discounts for 24h or 48h. The HADAG harbor ferries run on the Elbe between the Landungsbrücken and Blankenese — the most scenic public transport in the city.

U-Bahn & S-Bahn Lines

U3

Circles the Altstadt, passing Speicherstadt, Baumwall (Elbphilharmonie), Landungsbrücken (fish market), and Sternschanze. The most useful single line.

U1

Connects Altona and the Schanzenviertel to the city center and the Kunsthalle area.

S1

Airport to Hauptbahnhof to Altona to Blankenese. Essential for airport transfers and the western Elbe villages.

HADAG Line 62

Elbe river ferry: Landungsbrücken to Blankenese. 45 minutes, HVV ticket valid. The most scenic route to Blankenese.

Practical Tips

- The Hamburg Card (48h ~€24) covers all HVV transport including Alster ferries and HADAG river ferries, plus museum discounts.
- Validate your ticket before boarding. Inspectors are regular; fines are €60.
- The Landungsbrücken (piers) is the central hub for all harbor and Elbe river transport.
- Hamburg Airport (HAM): S1 to Hauptbahnhof, 25 minutes, covered by Hamburg Card.

Getting To & From Hamburg

Hamburg Airport (HAM)

S1 to Hauptbahnhof: 25 minutes, €3.50 or Hamburg Card. Rideshare option also available.

Hamburg Hauptbahnhof

Germany's busiest station. ICE to Berlin (1h40), Frankfurt (3h30), Munich (5h30). Intercity to Cologne (4h).

Hamburg → Berlin

1h 40 min by ICE. Departures every 30 minutes from Hauptbahnhof. One of the most frequent rail connections in Germany.

Hamburg → Copenhagen

4h 30 min by IC. Crosses the Fehmarn Belt — scenic. Or the new tunnel when complete.

CONTINGENCY

Backup Plans

Hamburg is a rainy city. It is built for it.

Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe

Arts and crafts museum in a building adjacent to the Hauptbahnhof — one of the best decorative arts collections in Germany. Japanese lacquerware, Art Nouveau interiors, and fashion design. Free on the first Thursday of the month.

Miniatur Wunderland

The world's largest model railway exhibition in the Speicherstadt — 16,000 square metres of hyper-detailed miniature landscapes covering the US, Scandinavia, Switzerland, and Hamburg itself. Book well ahead at [miniatur-wunderland.com](https://www.miniatur-wunderland.com); queues without a ticket are hours long.

Deichtorhallen

Two vast 1914 market halls converted to contemporary art and photography museum space. One of the most important venues for contemporary exhibitions in northern Europe. The photography museum (Haus der Photographie) is consistently excellent.

Hamburg Museum (Museum für Hamburgische Geschichte)

The most comprehensive history of Hamburg available — from the medieval trading city through the great fire of 1842 and the wartime destruction to the present. The model of the pre-war city is extraordinary.

Altonaer Museum

Northern German folk art, maritime history, and regional culture in Altona. The collection of historic figureheads from wooden ships is one of the finest of its kind.

Queue-Beating Strategies

- Miniatur Wunderland: Book online at [miniatur-wunderland.com](https://www.miniatur-wunderland.com). Walk-up queues are 2+ hours.
- Elbphilharmonie Plaza: Book at [elbphilharmonie.de](https://www.elbphilharmonie.de). Free but fills daily.
- Kunsthalle: No booking required. Free first Thursday evening of the month.
- Altona Fish Market: Arrive by 6am on Sunday for the full experience before the crowds.
- Fischereihafen-Restaurant: Book ahead — it fills for both lunch and dinner on weekends.

KNOW YOUR CITY

Know Your Stadtteile

Hamburg has 105 districts. Here are the eight that matter most for your 48 hours.

Speicherstadt & HafenCity

WAREHOUSE DISTRICT & NEW HARBOR

UNESCO-listed warehouse district and Europe's largest inner-city development project. The Elbphilharmonie, the Miniatur Wunderland, and the harbor waterfront.

St. Pauli & Reeperbahn

NIGHTLIFE & BEATLES HISTORY

Hamburg's most famous neighborhood for all the right and wrong reasons. The Reeperbahn, Große Freiheit, and the Landungsbrücken harbor piers.

Schanzenviertel

CREATIVE & INDEPENDENT

The most characterful neighborhood for an evening. Schulterblatt, Bullerei, Zum Wohl, and the kind of street life Hamburg keeps for itself.

Eppendorf & Winterhude

RESIDENTIAL NORTH

Hamburg's most desirable inner residential neighborhoods. The Isemarkt (Germany's longest open-air market) and the Alster lake restaurants.

Altstadt & Neustadt

HISTORIC CORE

The medieval city rebuilt after the 1842 fire. The Rathaus, the Binnenalster, the Chilehaus, and the Kontorhaus district.

Altona & Ottensen

BEST FISH & MOST LIVEABLE

Hamburg's most consistently good neighborhood for eating — the Große Elbstraße fish restaurants, the fish market, and the residential Ottensen streets behind.

Blankenese

ELBE VILLAS & STAIRCASE QUARTER

Hamburg's most extraordinary residential landscape — 19th-century villas and the Treppenviertel staircase network descending to the Elbe. 30 minutes by S-Bahn.

HafenCity (emerging south)

ARCHITECTURE & CONTEMPORARY ART

The Deichtorhallen, the Elbphilharmonie, and the ongoing development of Europe's largest inner-city project. Worth walking even mid-construction.

ESSENTIAL TIPS

What Nobody Tells You About Hamburg

Eight things that actually matter.

Hamburg is not Berlin

Hamburg is richer, quieter, and more internationally minded than Berlin. The creative scene is real but operates without the self-consciousness. People here are getting on with things.

The fish market is an experience

Sunday morning, 5am, with the remnants of the Reeperbahn night alongside the fish vendors and the morning coffee drinkers. It is genuinely strange and genuinely Hamburg. Go once.

Hamburg invented the Hamburger

The Hamburg steak — ground beef patty — was a 19th-century German immigrant contribution to American food culture. The connection is real. The best Hamburgers in the city are at various craft burger places, not at the tourist spots on the Reeperbahn.

Labskaus is worth ordering

The traditional Hamburg sailor dish — corned beef, potatoes, beetroot, pickled herring, and a fried egg — sounds terrible and tastes surprisingly good. Order it at a traditional restaurant once.

The weather is maritime

Hamburg gets 200 days of rain per year and the locals treat this as a normal background condition. A waterproof layer is as essential as a coat. The city operates regardless.

The Elbphilharmonie changed the city

The building opened in 2017 after years of cost overruns and political controversy. It now has the longest reservation waiting list for concerts in Germany. The Plaza visit is free and gives you the building's logic.

The Beatles connection is genuine

John, Paul, George, and Pete Best played 270 nights in Hamburg in 1960–62 before their first record. The city made them a band before Britain knew who they were. The Große Freiheit clubs are where it happened.

Hamburg is Germany's wealthiest city

It has the highest per-capita income of any German state. The difference from Berlin is visible in the quality of the infrastructure, the restaurants, and the public spaces. This is not an accident — Hamburg has been a major port for 800 years.

CONNECTIONS

Rail & River Gateway

Elbe River Cruises · European Rail Hub

Elbe River Cruises

Hamburg sits at the western terminus of the Elbe river cruise route — the most important river cruise corridor after the Danube. Ships dock at the Altona Cruise Center or the HafenCity terminal, both within easy reach of the city center. Nicko Cruises, AROSA, and Viking operate the Hamburg-Prague route on the Elbe. If your cruise begins or ends in Hamburg, the city warrants two full days: the Elbphilharmonie alone justifies a separate morning.

By Train (Recommended)

Hamburg → Berlin 1h 40 min

ICE departures every 30 minutes. One of the most frequent intercity connections in Europe. Book at bahn.de.

Hamburg → Copenhagen 4h 30 min

Direct IC service via the Storebælt Bridge. Book at dsb.dk or bahn.de. Scenic route.

Hamburg → Amsterdam 5h 30 min

IC or Intercity Express via Osnabrück. Book at ns.nl or bahn.de for best advance fares.

Hamburg → Frankfurt 3h 30 min

ICE direct. Hourly departures from Hauptbahnhof.

Hamburg → Munich 5h 30 min

ICE direct. Book ahead for best fares.

Hamburg → Cologne 4 hours

IC or ICE direct. Access to the Rhine cruise route.

Hamburg awaits.

You have the plan. The fish market at dawn, the warehouse district at dusk, and the concert hall that changed the city.
The Elbe does the rest. Just show up.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE: FINAL CHECKLIST

- Screenshot Day 1 and Day 2 schedules for offline use
- Book Elbphilharmonie Plaza at elbphilharmonie.de — fills daily
- Book Miniatur Wunderland at miniatur-wunderland.com — book weeks ahead
- Buy Hamburg Card at airport or Hauptbahnhof — covers all transport
- Set an alarm for 5am on Sunday if visiting the fish market
- Book Bullerei or Clouds for dinner ahead of time
- Download Google Maps Hamburg offline before you land

Your interactive map is one scan away.

All locations from this guide, colour-coded by day, open on your phone.



goingsolo.life/maps/hamburg

GoingSolo.Life

TRAVEL ALONE. LIVE FULLY.
