

Jewish life in Düsseldorf

An open culture and steeped in history

Immerse yourself in the Jewish community, get to know a culture and trace its history: the Jewish community is an intrinsic part of Düsseldorf with its open centre of faith, places for reflection and remembrance, and creative cuisine from Tel-Aviv that is not only traditional but also delightful.

Food and life around the New Synagogue

Judaism is part of everyday life in Düsseldorf. Around street corners or in parks, there are houses that can tell stories, places where faith is actively practised and places with chocolate matzah, falafel and shawarma on the shelf or on the menu.

All that can be found of the Old Synagogue these days is a door that was discovered after World War Two and has since been incorporated into the New Synagogue. The former place of worship was destroyed by SA stormtroopers in the 'Night of Broken Glass' in 1938 and the city council at the time subsequently ordered the Jewish community to demolish the remains of the building at its own expense. A memorial plaque at Kasernenstrasse commemorates the fateful event.

The bright and airy New Synagogue with its colourful stained-glass windows was erected in Düsseldorf-Derendorf in 1958. Anyone with a love of architecture or a simple interest can request a guided tour. The nearby Kosher King and Lechaim mini-markets and the Israeli restaurant 'Die Kurve' offer fresh, home-made delicacies for anyone wanting not just to see Jewish and Israeli culture but to taste it as well.

Active Jewish life in Düsseldorf is plain to see in its establishments such as the Jewish pre-school, primary school and secondary school, and the retirement home, which together support members of the community throughout their lives.

Special occasions, religious services and traditional food can also be encountered in the Chabad Lubavitch Family and Education Centre, which comprises more than 1,700 members. Anyone wanting to try kosher food or get to know the faith community better is most welcome.

Places of remembrance – personal stories

Trace history, find out what happened and do not forget: the memorial plaque at the site of the Old Synagogue is just one reminder of the Nazi period and the Shoah, or holocaust. In 2015, the memorial centre Mahn- und Gedenkstätte Düsseldorf unveiled an exhibition about children and young people in Düsseldorf under national socialism that gives visitors a real insight into the personal stories of young Jewish people between 1933 and 1945. A library and an open archive contain more than 6,000 books and documents for those interested in finding out more about the topic.

From 1933 to 1934, the building served as the Düsseldorf headquarters of the Gestapo, which included interrogation rooms and cells.

The deportation memorial at the old freight train station is also thought-provoking. At the north end of the park, a re-imagined section of railway track serves to commemorate the first deportation train to leave Düsseldorf on 27 October 1941.

A notable personality with a Jewish background is the poet Heinrich Heine. Works by the poet and politician have been translated more often than those of any other German poet. The house where he was born is now subject to a preservation order and features a book shop offering a chance to browse and sit down with a book. The Heinrich-Heine Institute is ideal for anyone wanting to find out more about the life and works of the thinker and writer.

A visit to the new Jewish cemetery provides an opportunity for tranquillity, contemplation and reflection. It is part of Düsseldorf's Nordfriedhof. Its counterpart is the old Jewish cemetery, around 700 metres to the south-east at Ulmenstrasse.

Jewish life in the city on the Rhine

- Comprising some 7,000 members, the Jewish community in Düsseldorf is the largest in North Rhine-Westphalia and the third-largest in Germany.
- The first synagogue in Düsseldorf was built by a forefather of Heinrich Heine in 1712.
- Tours are available of the New Synagogue, providing hidden glimpses of history and architecture.
- Excellent kosher food is on the menu at Die Kurve, and is also available at the Lechaim and Kosher King mini-markets.
- Another focal point of active Jewish life in Düsseldorf is the Chabad Lubavitch Family and Education Centre, where religious services and Jewish festivals are held. Visitors are invited to try kosher food and get to know the Jewish way of life.
- Numerous memorials are dotted around the city such as the memorial centre Mahn- und Gedenkstätte Düsseldorf, the Old Synagogue memorial and the memorial at the former freight train station (Alter Güterbahnhof).

Matching articles



Places of remembrance and memorial Düsseldorf

www.duesseldorf-tourismus.de/attraktionen/mahn-und-gedenkstaette-duesseldorf-10102a63ff



Jewish community Düsseldorf

www.duesseldorf-tourismus.de/attraktionen/juedische-gemeinde-duesseldorf-b8512e3d10