Eating in Hamburg

Hamburg’s appeal can be narrowed down to one simple calling card: it’s one of the coolest cities on Earth. If you want to sample some of its hottest cafés and restaurants, read on.

Altes Mädchen  EUROPEAN ££
(altes-maedchen.com)
The lofty red-brick halls of a 19th-century animal market have been upcycled into a hip culinary destination that includes a coffee roastery, a celebrity chef’s restaurant, and this beguiling brewpub with a central bar, in-house bakery and garden.

Anna Sgroi  ITALIAN £££
(annasgroi.de)
Lauded chef Anna Sgroi has taken the foods of her southern Italian childhood and elevated them to new heights. A seemingly mundane dish such as stuffed artichokes is sublime, and that’s just to start. Expect dishes demonstrating bold flavours, the finest ingredients and flawless execution. Service is smooth and unfussy.

Bullerei  INTERNATIONAL £££
(bulerei.com)
One of the coolest dining spaces in the city, Bullerei inhabits a converted former slaughterhouse with lovely high ceilings and a real buzz that bounces off the walls – don’t come here for a quiet, romantic dinner. Service is cool and attentive, and the menu revolves around steak dishes and Italian-inflected choices.

Café Gnosa  CAFE £
(gnosa.de)
With abstract art and in-house bakery, busy Café Gnosa draws an affable gay and straight crowd in St Georg. The curved glass windows give it an Art Deco vibe. There are outside tables, and it serves breakfast until 4pm daily – just the kind of thing that Hamburg’s nightlife deserves.

Deichgraf  GERMAN £££
(deichgraf-hamburg.de)
In a prime setting with water on one side and long streetside tables on the other, Deichgraf excels in Hamburg specialities cooked to a high standard. The menu changes seasonally, and much of the food is sourced from the region. The labskaus (meat, fish and potato stew) is especially good, and they offer a smaller portion for those who’d just like to try it.

Die Bank  BRASSERIE £££
(diebank-brasserie.de)
Inhabiting the glorious Jugendstil (Art Nouveau) interior of an 1897 bank, Die Bank is one of Hamburg’s most respected kitchens, and draws the great and good of the city. Head chef Thomas Fischer won a Michelin star elsewhere, and his cooking is light, assured and creative. The menu changes with the seasons.

Fischbrötchenbude  SEAFOOD £
(bruecke-10.de)
There are a gazillion fish sandwich vendors in Hamburg, but we’re going to stick our neck out and say that this vibrant, clean and contemporary outpost makes the best. Try a classic bismarck (pickled herring) or matjes (brined herring), or treat yourself to a bulging shrimp sandwich. Lovely tables outside.

GaumenGanoven  INTERNATIONAL £
(gaumenganoven.de)
We love this place, a fun, brick-lined backdrop for dining on little morsels, rather like tapas (plus a children’s version) at the intersection between contemporary flair and German traditional dishes – your options include labskaus (here, a meat, fish, beetroot and potato mash), pannfisch (fried Arctic char), and steak tartare served with truffle paste.

Mö-Grill  GERMAN £
(Moenckebergstrasse 11)
You can smell the curry and see the crowds from two streets away at this very popular venue for that beloved German fast food, the Currywurst. Locals agree that the versions here (and at a second stand across the street) are about the best anywhere.

Restaurant Kleine Brunnenstrasse 1  EUROPEAN £
(kleine-brunnenstrasse.de)
The heart of northern Germany’s slow-food movement beats in this exquisite bistro. Menus change daily and always reflect what’s in season and fresh. Preparations are simple, allowing flavours to shine. There’s summer seating outside; book in advance.

Vlet in der Speicherstadt  GERMAN £££
(vlet.de)
Right by the pedestrian bridge, Vlet offers three different menus (plus a children’s version) at the intersection between contemporary flair and German traditional dishes – your options include labskaus (here, a meat, fish, beetroot and potato mash), pannfisch (fried Arctic char), and steak tartare served with truffle paste.

Don’t miss

Hamburg’s original beach bar, Strandperle is a must for beer, burgers and people-watching. All ages and types mingle and wriggle their toes in the sand, especially at sunset, right on the Elbe, as huge freighters glide past (open year-round, weekends only October to April, strandperle-hamburg.de).
Sleeping

Superbude St Pauli
Best for partying
(superbude.de)
The young and forever-young mix without a shred of prejudice at this rocking design hotel-hostel combo in St Pauli that is all about living, laughing, partying and, yes, even sleeping well. All rooms have comfortable beds and private baths, breakfast is served until noon and there’s a ‘rock star suite’ with a bottle of Astra beer as a pillow treat.

Henri Hotel
Best for retro digs
(heni-hotel.com)
Kidney-shaped tables, plush armchairs, vintage typewriters – the Henri channels the 1950s so successfully that you half expect to run into Don Draper. Its 65 rooms and studios are a good fit for urban lifestyle junkies who like the alchemy of modern comforts and retro design. For more elbow room get an L-sized room with a kingsize bed.

The Westin Hamburg
Best for watery views
(westinhamburg.com)
This has to be Hamburg’s premier address, inside the lower half of the daring new Elbphilharmonie hall in Hafencity. It’s definitely worth paying extra for a room with a city or harbour view, especially one on the upper floor (ask when you book) – if you do, you may never wish to leave your room. Rooms are stylish, minimalist and the service is professional.

FURTHER READING
For more on the city, pick up our Germany guidebook (£16.99) or download its Hamburg & the North chapter (£2.99; shop.lonelyplanet.com).