

Ems River -- From Classy Schloß Holte-Stukenbrock To The Dollart

The 371km (231mi) journey on the Ems River in Germany begins in [North Rhine-Westphalia](#), in the classy town of [Schloß Holte-Stukenbrock](#) in the southern [Teutoburg Forest](#). And just like some other [German Rivers](#), not all of the Ems is navigable — “just” 206km of it — before it blesses the [Dollart](#) in [Lower Saxony](#), which leads to the Ems Estuary and, ultimately, the [Wadden Sea](#) & [North Sea](#).

Schloß Holte-Stukenbrock is nice with its annual Harvest Festival in the Fall, its zoo safari, tiny parks, old churches (like the *Brinkkapelle*), and a 15th century moated castle.

Coming down the Ems the next charming town is [Rheda-Wiedenbrück](#), a pretty decent sized place with around 47,000 people living here. Rheda-Wiedenbrück has a gorgeous *Altstadt* (Old Town) with lots of half-timbered houses, and a *Rathaus* (Town Hall) built in 1618. Curious that the *Rathaus* survived the [Thirty Years' War](#) that started the same year.

Rheda-Wiedenbrück's St. Giles Church survived too, but you can still see the bullet holes from the soldier's weapons on the building. I don't see any on the town's moated castle or along the mills framing the Ems. Let me know if you find any, though, while I'm scoping out the town's history museum that's got exhibits from the Middle Ages onwards.

[Gütersloh](#) is a real treat. The Wine Festival at Pentecost is delightfully fun, and all the half-timbers, the Martin Luther Church, and the City Museum are wonderful too.

The Ems brings us now to [Harsewinkel](#), close to the Marienfeld Monastery and nature areas. Every year they hold an Organ Festival, but you can see the half-timbered houses (like the Old Deanery) any time — no special dates needed.

From here you follow the Ems River until you get to the studs of [Warendorf](#). Not the hunky, good enough to be a male centerfold stud — it's horse studs. Not for you? Good thing there's an Old Town to explore, and the got Gothic Tower of the St. Mary's Church is an amazing piece of architecture and engineering.

Our next town of [Telgte](#), ooohh the good ol' Telgte, is a place of pilgrimage, hosting over a 100,000 people a year. Even if you're not here for religious reasons, the Nativity Museum is quite interesting; the Distillery Museum informative, and the Medieval Christmas Market and Medieval Spectacle are both super fun.

Sorry, nothing medieval in the next town along the Ems. Actually, there isn't anything before the outbreak of the Thirty Years War here in [Greven](#). There is a replica of a 9th century farm, and an

outdoor theater (always nice to enjoy the classics under the stars).

[Emsdetten](#), which is Greven's neighbor, is the fun-loving town on the Ems. Every year they hold a bunch of festivals, like the Street Carnival, the May Festival, the Autumn Fair, and the Emsdettener of September — a three day event on the last weekend of the month.

From the banks of the Ems I see the tower of St. Dionysius in [Rheine](#). A good place to stop, not only for its church, but to see the Monastery Bentlage, City Museum, Neolithic graves, and hear a little Low German being spoken.

As we're crossing into Lower Saxony around [Lingen](#), motorboating along the Ems is downright restricted or only partially. It'll be this way until we get to [Meppen](#) — so canoe it at this point.

Lingen first though. The Ems runs right through Lingen's 12 districts, a land ruled over by [Germanic Tribes](#), the House of Orange, and the Prussians. Ohhh, the who's who of [German history!](#)

Forget that for now, Lingen's got half-timbers to see, and right outside the Town Hall is an ice skating rink (that's winter activity — so don't think it's gonna be there in August ;-). Warmer weather is for Lingen's Port Festival, or its Old Town Festival on the third weekend of September.

Whoo, we made it to Meppen — where the Ems River meets its largest tributary, the Hase River. This is one of the 12 tributaries (like the Große Aa, Leda, Bever, and Lutter) it meets along the way. Oh yeah, and the motorboating restriction is lifted. ;-)

Meppen is where the Ems meets the Route of Megalithic Culture (a scenic route that's all about prehistoric grave mounds & stuff). Not your thing? That's quite all right because you can visit the City Museum, the St. Vitus Church, the Old Port, the 19th century *Koppelschleuse*, the Town Hall from 1408, or party at the Medieval Market (early May), the Autumn Fair (October), or make new friends while drinking *Glühwein* (mulled wine) at the obligatory Christmas Market.

I like it here, thinkin' I'm gonna stay here for a while. So, you're on your own in [Papenburg](#). Don't freak out... you'll be fine as you scope out all the windmills, the church of St. Anthony, and the town's landmark: the St. Michael's Tower.

You can leave the Ems along a number of channels that cross the river from here, but then you'd miss out on [Leer](#) in [East Frisia](#). Or, what about exploring the [German Fen Route](#) on your way to Leer? It's easy as it runs right along the Ems here. :-)

The Samson House in Leer is great. Not only does it have an exhibit about East Frisian home decor, but a wine shop too. After that go to the Tea Museum, the crypt at what used to be a medieval church, and the pedestrian area filled with cute lil' shops and cafes. You'll be lucky if

you're here for the Boat Regatta in July or the Rowing Regatta in late August/early September.

Ohh, it's a bit chilly up here that time of year, so don't forget your jacket!

The last place on the Ems River brings you to [Emden](#), a(nother) town on the [Dollard Route](#), and what was once a [Frisian](#) trade post.

What can I tell you about Emden that you might not already know... Oh well, how about you'll find one of the biggest Mennonite communities in the world there!?

What else can you find in Emden? *Pinkel*. This tasty dish is usually made when the weather turns colder; and made with kale, bacon, and smoked pork.

If you've traveled the entire route of the Ems River, you've eaten good (wasn't the *Pinkel* obvious) and met with quite a few scenic routes (I forgot to mention the Ems Cycling route), passed conservation areas (the Dollart is part of the Wadden Sea National Park), and you've managed to connect here from a number of other waterways like the Dortmund-Ems Canal or the *Küstenkanal* (Coastal Canal).

The towns are idyllic, the weather is perfect, and the people are friendly. What else more could we want?

Ja, more *Pinkel* would be a good start. :-)