

## Esslingen am Neckar Is A Pretty Little Town With Character

Entering the medieval town of Esslingen am Neckar over the stone Pleinsau bridge (one of the oldest in Germany), you have started your journey back in time. The old Pleinsau Gate nearby — which all traffic had to pass through to enter the town — dominates one side of town. The defensive Burg (castle) and old city walls retain their ancient effect on the other.

Heading next over the Inner Bridge (which looks more like a street really), you will find a small chapel perched mid way. These buildings are common on older bridges throughout Germany and are all dedicated to St Nicolaus — the patron saint of skippers and rafters.

Today, however, this one here in Esslingen acts as a war memorial.

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As you stroll further into the center of the old town you will find a myriad of streets and houses dating back to medieval times. Old merchant houses have given way to the carpet of tables and chairs of the numerous street cafes — filling the spacious plazas with activity. Nearby, you can still find the majestic *Stadkirche* (town church) dating from the 9th century declaring the towns *Marktplatz* as the center of the community.

*Strohstraße* (Straw Street) and *Hafenmarkt* (Potters Market) are both used for festivals and theater throughout the year. Both are very relaxed and a great place to stop for lunch.

If the weather is not too good, you could always pop in to the Yellow house museum to delve further into the town's long history.

There was a great fire in Esslingen in 1701. So many buildings — like the County Court House and

the *Württembergische Landesbühne* theater — were rebuilt afterwards. These buildings have their own beautiful designs and are a world away from the tiny original buildings in the *Altstadt*.

If, however, you fancy a change of scenery, stroll down the steps onto the Maille — a strip of green lawn between the man-made channels that run under the Inner Bridge we passed earlier. In the summer months you could dip your toes in the cool fountain here, or investigate the water wheels that control the flow of the [Neckar](#) and contemplate all the other people who have sat right where you are today.