

Friedberg (Hesse) -- Castles, Churches And... OMG! Elvis!

Friedberg (Hesse) can mix you up when you get lost. Standing in the shopping boutiques of Elvis Presley Platz, looking up at the 12th century castle, is kind of a mind-bending moment. The old and the new really do blend here, in ways that aren't always expected.

First, of course, there are the old rivalries, played out in stone. You'll notice walking around that while there are many different styles of stone architecture in the town, it doesn't seem coordinated. This is because the castle and the town were often owned or controlled by different people.

Like two neighbors who can't share a fence, the townspeople and the castle people took pride in building in completely different styles. You can see Gothic, Neo-Gothic, Romanesque, Baroque, Renaissance and many other styles just walking from one side of town to another.

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Thus, the Friedberg castle has a 63 meter tower looming over the town, with a broad viewing platform and turrets. The town has the Gothic hall church in Wolf Lane, built in a completely different style... but also with a tower.

As you compare this and that between different elements, it's hard not to smile even as you get blown away by the variety. :-)

And then there is the Friedberg Elvis connection. When he was in the military, he was stationed at the Ray Barracks here for two years. Well, they claim him anyway! He actually didn't live in Friedberg, he lived in a nearby village, but the shopping plaza named for him reflects his presence. Photo souvenirs and albums are also available.

Other new elements exist in the arts. The Old *Hallenbad* theater is brand new, opening in Friedberg in 2007. The Ironman Germany runs nearby and has inspired an expansion of walking and riding trails in the area. You can get some exercise, or simply walk along the banks of the city canals, humming a bit of Elvis here and there as you take in the scenery.