

Schwelm -- Where Good Things Come In Small Packages

Schwelm proves the old adage that good things come in small packages. In terms of physical area, the town is the smallest place in [North Rhine-Westphalia](#). But for a small place, it has held on pretty tenaciously since it was founded back in the 9th century.

This is in part because Schwelm participates in one of the traditions that Germany is most famous for — brewing [beer](#). The town is home to one of the last privately owned breweries in Germany, modestly named the Schwelm Brewery. Founded in 1830 by Haarmann and Kathagen, the original buildings are still in use although the brewery now uses all modern techniques and metal instead of wooden containers.

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Thus, when you are in town, be sure to get some beer! It's supporting local industry, a good cause. Buy two beers — the general taste is light and fruity, with a medium dark color and it's expensive abroad — nearly \$6 for one bottle in North America. You can savor it all the more as your ears are serenaded by one of Schwelm's other local industries — piano making.

The Ibach Piano company is the oldest piano manufacturer in the world, operating in Schwelm since 1794. Handmade, the pianos are treasured by musicians the world over. Naturally, musical performances locally are all on the high-quality instruments, so taking advantage of summer concerts is like getting a Carnegie Hall level experience.

The local traditions of independent industry also led this small town to found Europe's biggest fair trade organization, known as GEPA. The local shops thus stock really cool things from all over the world, so a walk through the shops is well worth your time. You will also want to hit Schwelm's September *Heimatfestzug*, with the parade and market bringing even more interesting goods to

town.

Who knew such a little town could be full of so many treasures? Schwelm really proves that no corner is vacant of culture and great products. :-)