

## Werne Lights Up Summer Nights With Festivals

Lazing in the market square, you'd hardly imagine that every one of the old buildings surrounding it had to be painstakingly saved, over and over again. The old town hall in Werne looks like any regular town hall that just happens to be 500 years old. No sign that it's been torched at least three times — they've learned a few tricks over the years!

Werne started out as a religious town, with a chapel built around 800 A.D. All over town you can still see old churches. Both Catholic and Protest churches have a big presence here. Their stone walls belie the traditional easy going nature of the local people.

The smiling faces you see in town now are just as open and trusting as the original settlers. They just have smoke alarms and a major salt water pool to rely on these days.

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The early Werne residents had to break down and build walls. The town was burned to the ground and rebuilt on 4 separate occasions, yet the residents refused to move out. They repaired everything and try to use as many of the old buildings as they can even now.

When you go to the City Library, appreciate that it is housed in a 600 year old building! In fact, once you know about the rough history of the town, the older structures in the area still in use should merit some serious awe.

Also awe-inspiring: Sim Jue. It's a shortened-version of Simon-Judah, the Catholic name days when the festival had permission to be held each October. Since starting in 1362, it has turned into a 4 day festival downtown.

All the old buildings in the square are strung with lights, and there are amusement park rides and local craft booths. Be prepared for crowds — a whopping 400,000 people attend each year.

You can walk the town in a day, which is convenient for short visits, although if you want to do the spas and the museums you should schedule more than one day for Werne.

However, the compact nature of the town means that while it is pedestrian friendly, there are a limited number of hotels available. In the summer when local travelers flock to the salt-pool spas, you'd better book a room ahead to be sure you have a place to stay.