

NORDLINGEN: A TOWN IN THE CRATER



Unfortunately for the romantics yet fortunately for the businessmen, today's Germany is seen as Europe's centre of conferences and business meetings. This particular type of tourism is extremely lucrative but where does it leave the rest of the country's tourism? Apart from the skiing and superb metropolitan areas, Germany's quaint towns are relatively underestimated in the tourism portfolio. Foreigners who see the whole country as being one big economical giant with little to offer away from business suits and conference rooms undoubtedly neglect many German towns. Those who go beyond the stereotypes may enjoy some of Europe's most stunning towns, including the little known Nordlingen.

Nordlingen lies in the Donau-Ries district of Bavaria in the heart of Germany's south. It is one of three German towns with a completely established city wall. Roman castellum remains were found under the town, dating back to the year 85. The 16 towers of Nordlingen add testament to the charming atmosphere of the town, which is perhaps not as famous within Europe as it should be.

Nordlingen has two other main points of interest for visitors, slightly steering away from the medieval theme. Firstly, there is the Scharlachrennen, or the famous Nordlingen horse-riding tournament. Secondly and perhaps more importantly, it is the very location of the town - right in the middle of a giant meteorite crater, called the Nördlinger Ries. The crater was even used by Apollo astronauts for field training purposes in the 70's. Today, it provides an attraction for a number of scientists.

However, as is the case with so many other smaller German towns, the greatest offer is that of atmosphere and picturesque outlay. It is time for many to appreciate the fact Germany is not just a mass of skyscrapers and other business complexes. If one takes the time to look, there is an abundance of history and charm too. Nordlingen is the perfect example.

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