

DUSSELDORF

This is a note of a brief (2 night) visit to Dusseldorf between Xmas and New Year en route to Frankfurt. The main reason was the convenience (direct flight from Newcastle) and the beer.

Getting to Dusseldorf is easy. Dusseldorf is a major airport with flights from many parts of the UK. It is a hub for Eurowings/Germanwings, the low cost subsidiary of Lufthansa, so cheap flights are often available. There are frequent train services from the Airport to the main station, Dusseldorf Hauptbahnhof, in the city centre and a focus for city transport.

An alternative route is by Eurostar to Brussels then by high speed ICE or Thalys train onwards to Køln where there are frequent connections onwards to Dusseldorf. Cheap tickets often available from German Railways' (DB) English site or from www.loco2.com .

Dusseldorf is known for its altbier, a dark beer served in small glasses, and there are many breweries in and around Dusseldorf which brew it. There are four remaining brewpubs, making the beer on the premises, and they were the focus of the visit.



The four brewpubs are:

Schumacher, Oststr 123

Im Füchschen, Ratingerstr 28

Zum Schlüssel, Bolkerstr 41-47

Zum Uerige, Bergerstr 1

Zum Uerige via Google Images

All of them are in city centre, between the Hauptbahnhof and the River Rhine. They are a bit of a walk from each other, but easy enough to find with Google Maps or the maps at www.ratebeer.com Schumacher is a bit out on a limb from the others and, if time is limited, an alternative is their pub (Schumacher im Goldenen Kessel) at Bolker str 46, opposite Zum Schlüssel.



Each has its own character, but are broadly similar. Each has a series of rooms, from taprooms to restaurants, usually wood-panelled, with some areas designed for stand-up drinking, others more relaxed. The beer comes in wooden barrels and they are regularly replaced with another cask brought through from the brewery. They do carryouts also and it's not unusual to see locals carry away a barrel of beer.

The waiters/bar staff will assume its altbier you want unless you specify otherwise (and you may look at us as though we are strange for not wanting Alt – it is sometimes the only beer anyway), and it's (too) easy to order the next glass from circulating waiters. The pubs also do food from

snacks to full meals, though the choice may be a bit limited for vegetarians. Dusseldorf is very definitely a drinking city and the pubs were busy on Tuesday and Wednesday. I had two nights – the first was a very sensible initial explore and the second ended up getting pretty out of hand. A highly enjoyable experience.

The brewpubs obviously sell their own beers, but there are plenty of other places in the city centre, all selling altbier. Other Dusseldorf altbiers recommended by those in the know (I didn't get round to trying them) are Frankenheim Alt and Düssel Alt, plus Hannen Alt from nearby Mönchengladbach.

On the second evening I was taken by a couple I got talking to in Zum Uerige to a tiny bar on one of the shopping streets (I can't remember the name or find it online) - I think in good weather most of the serving is done through a window onto the street. It was full of elderly people drinking shots of what tasted like fortified wine. (They said that Jagermeister and similar drinks, though German, have not yet become trendy amongst younger people). At some point I was also in Zum Goldenen Einhorn, next to Im Füchschen.

It wasn't all beer.



The city centre is pleasant enough for a walk round, with some pretty spots near the Rathaus. The riverside is worth a walk (there are bars in summer) with good views of the bridges and the barge traffic on the Rhine.

The Rhine promenade at Dusseldorf

I also had time to fit in a visit to Wuppertal, about 30 minutes from Dusseldorf by frequent trains. (S bahn S8 direction Hagen) The main reason was for a trip on the Schwebebahn, the monorail which is the backbone of the Wuppertal transport system



Wuppertal is a major industrial city which grew up along the valley of the River Wupper (hence the name), several villages and towns eventually merging into one city. The monorail was built in 1901, though it has been modernised since. Trains run every few minutes from Vohwinkel in the West via Wuppertal Hauptbahnhof to Oberbarmen in the east and is the backbone of the city transport system. It's the only city based monorail

system - others are for specialist functions, for example at airports or theme parks). You soon get used to the train arriving at a platform and swaying gently to a halt. (and the locals must get used to a lack of privacy despite living on the third floor). Most of the route runs above the river Wupper though in Vohwinkel it runs above the main street. Very definitely worth a visit.