

Excursion:

The centre of Hamburg is spread around two lakes, the shopping areas around the “Binnenalster” and some of the best living districts around the “Außenalster”.

The excursion, however, will visit the harbour and lead a few kilometers downstream along the Elbe river to show you the real heart of the city and some of the changes accompanying the restructuring of the port district. Hamburg harbour is the 3rd largest in Europe (after Rotterdam and Antwerp). The most growing parts are the container terminals. The older, mixed cargo parts now have new roles.

Hamburg was already a settlement in the stone age, but the first written records from the year 832 refer to it as Ham-maburg (= fortification at the river bank). It was rumoured that Kaiser Friedrich I (called Barbarossa) granted Hamburg an exemption from taxes and free harbour trade, as well as free access to the sea in 1189. Due to the lack of official papers, the Senate of Hamburg issued its own document in 1265. Based on this, thus we celebrate the 822nd birthday of the harbour in 2011.

Hamburg was destroyed several times, most recently in 1842, when more than 1000 houses burnt down and in 1943 when heavy bombing in World War II erased most of the city and caused tens of thousands of deaths. This has led to Hamburg's appearance as a modern city, with many trees and parks, but only a few old buildings and, thank god, also with few high-rising buildings.

The pride of the city is the harbour and it is the harbour, which attracts tourism. Hamburg is a destination for more than 100 huge cruise liners per year, including the „Queen Mary 2“ and the „Freedom of the Seas“. If we are lucky, we will see one of these more than 300 meter long vessels.

The excursion will start at the “Speicherstadt” - a part of the “Freihafen”, created 1888 when Hamburg joined the “Deutsche Zollverein”. The “Freihafen” is a speciality of Hamburg harbour. It is a fenced-in area, controlled by customs, where goods can be brought in tax-free, stored and further processed. Customs charges are only imposed when goods leave the “Freihafen”. This made trading substantially easier in former



times. To this end, at least 20000 people were evicted to make room for the „Speicherstadt“ starting in 1883. The area is now under National Trust protection.

The “Speicherstadt” was used to store goods of all kinds such as coffee, tea and spices. These buildings are still partially used for storage, but some are now museums and administration offices. Time has almost run out for the customs-free zone and, due to EU trade regulations, it will be closed completely in 2013.

The contiguous areas of the “Speicherstadt”, the older harbour basins and the surrounding spaces, form the new “Hafen City”, dedicated to offices and housing. The old harbour basins could no longer be used, since the water in the “Fleets” is too shallow for modern freighters. At one end of this district (“Kehr Wieder Spitze”), the prestigious “Elbphilharmonie” is being built on top of a former huge storage building. The cost was originally estimated to be about 70 million Euro, but has risen to 357 million and will probably rise further. However, there have been no demonstrations of the kind seen in Stuttgart due to the peaceful disposition of Hamburg’s inhabitants.

The excursion will continue along the Elbe river, past the docks of Blohm & Voss, which were once the centre of German ship construction. They are now only used for repair and maintenance, since the newest container giants are welded in Korea and Japan. At the “Kehr Wieder Spitze”, we will board a boat and go down the river, passing the press centre of Gruner and Jahr, where new wisdom is concocted for the journals “Stern” and “GEO”. We will have a look at the old “Landungsbrücken” where recreation boats used to leave for Helgoland. Now they are moorages for harbour vessels and tourists.



Freedom of the Seas



Speicherstadt



Elbphilharmonie

Further down the river, one can see container ships longer than 350 meters, carrying up to 13.000 containers.

If it is not too dark and if the participants are not too tired from lectures and sightseeing, we may go to Övelgönne, where former captains had and have their houses along the river. Windows without curtains allow a glimpse at real life in cosy dwelling rooms. Finally, exhausted and hungry, those who stay a day longer and the others as well may



drink “lütt and lütt” (a small beer and a large booze) and have a modest dinner at their own expense.

For many reasons, such as the weather, there may be changes to this excursion plan.