

Experience history

There is an app, too: You can connect to the „Alte Synagoge Multimediaguide“ using the Wi-Fi and entering the IP address 192.168.200.9. From there, you will be able to access 31 texts, listen to the music and memories of emigrated members of Essen's former Jewish community, and listen to the soundtracks to videos about the making of a Torah scroll (at "sources of Jewish traditions"), music, films, and interviews from displays in the section of "Jewish way of life" (1st floor).

Let us know if you want to join our mailing list and visit our lectures, concerts, changing exhibitions, political Thursdays talks and book-readings. Look at our website.

www.alte-synagoge.essen.de

Interactive installations, such as the interactive table, help visitors to learn about kosher food, folk dances or vibrant Jewish communities around the world in a playful way.



Alte Synagoge

Edmund-Körner-Platz 1
45127 Essen
Germany

Opening hours

Tuesday to Sunday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
(except: 1. January, 1. May, 24. und 31. December),
entrance: free.

Telefon +49 201 88-45218

Telefax +49 201 88-45225

alte-synagoge@essen.de

www.alte-synagoge.essen.de

Impressum

Herausgeberin Stadt Essen, 41-4

Satz Presse- und Kommunikationsamt

Titelfoto Peter Prengel

Druck Amt für Zentralen Service

Stand März 2023 – englisch

Old Synagogue Essen



House of Jewish Culture



Old Synagogue Essen

The Old Synagogue in Essen, built in 1913, has had a chequered history. It served as the synagogue for Essen's Jewish community (a community which comprised 4,500 members in 1920) for 25 years until the night of 9 / 10 November 1938 when it was set alight by the Nazis. As the synagogue was situated in the middle of a residential quarter, the Nazis decided to set fire to it rather than use explosives.

After the war had ended, the synagogue remained a burnt-out ruin for a further 14 years until the City of Essen acquired the building in 1959. The City then gutted the interior and set up the "Haus Industrieform" exhibition ("industrial design").



Permanent Exhibition

The question of the building's use arose once again in 1979 following a cable fire inside the exhibition. The politicians' response was to turn the building into a "memorial site". Students of the young University of Essen created an exhibition on "Resistance to Fascism" using material belonging to the city's chronicler Ernst Schmidt (1924-2009) and, in 1988, a new exhibition on the history of the Jews in 20th century Essen, which focused particularly on the Nazi period, was opened.

In 2001, Paul Spiegel suggested setting up a "House of Jewish Culture" in the Old Synagogue. Today's "Haus jüdischer Kultur" was designed by a team of the Old Synagogue in collaboration with Esther Graf and Manja Altenburg of the "Agency for Jewish Culture".

This new permanent exhibition on contemporary Judaism was designed to portray Jews as co-creators of modern culture and not limit itself to the confines of national socialism.



The new exhibition opened in July 2010. After an introduction about synagogues and their architecture around the world, visitors are led into the "Sources of Jewish Tradition" exhibition area. This area teaches visitors about Jewish history, the life cycle, the calendar and the Torah as the basis of the Jewish religion and includes information on how the Torah scroll is made and how it is used in religious services.

Visitors are invited to learn about Jewish festivals on the former women's gallery, the eventful history of the building on the former organ gallery, and the history of the Essen's Jewish community on the mezzanine. Visitors will be introduced to different Jewish identities, including secular ones, on the middle floor.

Judaism is not just a „religious community“. After all, many Jews identify as „cultural Jews“.