



The German Customs Museum:



Central Customs Authority



The customs today

Today, the work of the customs continues, and is as varied as at any time in its chequered history.



As well as collecting duties and taxes, the central tasks of the customs include ensuring that international trade can take place smoothly, combating undeclared work, illegal employment, product piracy, contraband and criminal action, and working to protect endangered species.

Federal Customs, which has some 39,000 employees, is a modern financial and civil administration institution, whose functions range from the provision of services to the exercise of sovereign jurisdiction.



Customs employees in the German Customs Museum tell visitors about the diversity of the customs' tasks, and recount their own fascinating experiences working for this institution.

Deutsches Zollmuseum

Alter Wandrahm 16
20457 Hamburg

How to get there:

U 1 underground to 'Meißberg' station
Bus routes 4 or 6 to the 'Bei St. Annen' bus stop

Contact:

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Open:

Tuesday to Sunday from 10.00 to 17.00 hours
Entry: 2 euros
Children and young visitors under 18: free

Guided tours for groups of 10 visitors or more:
Tuesday to Friday, by prior arrangement
There is a library for scientifically-minded visitors.

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The German Customs Museum





The Speicherstadt customs museum

The German Customs Museum (Deutsches Zollmuseum) is in Hamburg's Speicherstadt, the old warehouse district, and at the gates of the new Hafen City. Visitors are offered a fascinating display presenting the history of the customs from antiquity to modern times in an exhibition that occupies 800 square metres in the rooms of what used to be the Kornhausbrücke Customs Office.

This permanent exhibition has something for everyone, young or old: From exciting contraband tales to all sorts of information about the customs, illustrated by over one thousand exhibits, diagrams, interactive items, as well as film and audio exhibits.

Not to forget the decommissioned customs cutter, the Oldenburg, moored in the Zollkanal in front of the museum, which all visitors can board to experience history at first hand.



The customs in the past

Actually, the history of the customs began 5,000 years ago, even before the apostle Matthew who is probably the most famous customs man in history.

Customs duties were first collected in the area of what is now modern-day Germany along the limes – the frontier wall of the Roman Empire.



During the Middle Ages political power in Germany fragmented and was replaced by a multitude of small states, all relying on customs duties. Even as late as 1800 there were some 1,800 customs stations scattered all over Germany.



In 1834, most of the German states joined together to form the German Customs Union, the Zollverein.

This meant that the long-cherished desire to make trade and travel less burdensome could be realised.



A largely uniform customs area was formed with the establishment of the German Reich in 1871. The Imperial Finance Administration was created under the 1919 Weimar Constitution.



During the Third Reich many customs administration officials were posted to "Customs Border Service". Rigorous border checks – especially of Jews – were carried out, primarily to prevent people leaving the country without valid identification documents, and to prevent currency being taken abroad illegally.



There were two custom administrations in divided Germany during the period from 1949 until 1990. They performed different functions, and pursued different objectives, according to either political system.