

# Time Traveler

An obsession with mechanical timepieces inspired the photographer Michael Friberg to go on a pilgrimage to Glashütte, a hamlet in eastern Germany with the world's greatest concentration of fine-watch brands.



While Switzerland's luxury-watch companies are sprinkled throughout the country, Germany's are all located in a single village of about 7,000. For centuries, Glashütte was a silver-mining stronghold, but when the ore began to run out in the mid 19th century, it refashioned itself as a watchmaking mecca. During the Soviet era, the industry was consolidated into a state-run *Kombinat*,

then nearly flickered out of existence after reunification. But in the past two decades it has made an improbable comeback. Today, aficionados can't get enough of Glashütte's products: last year, the town's 10 companies together turned out more than 32,000 timepieces. "The name *Glashütte* is a stamp of pride," Friberg says. "Good things come out of this town." Here, he explores what makes Glashütte tick.



## 1. NEUMARKTS SQUARE IN DRESDEN

"Watch enthusiasts like to make pilgrimages to Glashütte from Dresden, which is only 30 minutes away. Many of the town's young workers live in Dresden."



## 2. WORKERS AT GLASHÜTTE ORIGINAL

"I expected to find all these old German men making watches, but it was a bunch of 26-year-olds. There are several watchmaking schools in Glashütte, which students can enter as young as 16."



## 3. A TIMEPIECE BY A. LANGE & SÖHNE

"A. Lange & Söhne was founded in 1845 by Ferdinand Adolf Lange, the first guy to make watches in Glashütte. After the Wall fell, his great-grandson moved here to start the company up again."



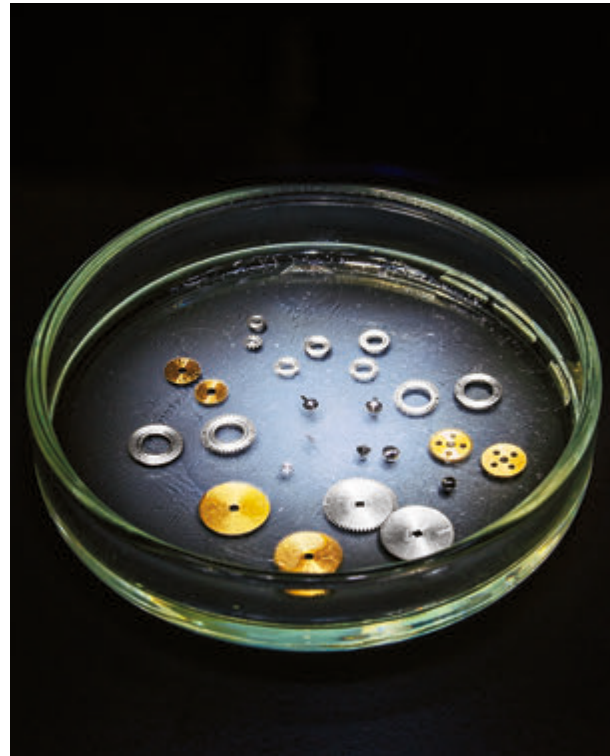
## 4. AN OLD EAST GERMAN TRABANT

"There are lots of these little Soviet-looking cars everywhere, but the town itself doesn't feel super Soviet, because it largely survived World War II. It feels like a quaint German village."



**5. THE ORIGINAL NOMOS WATCH FACTORY**

"This is the biggest of the three buildings Nomos owns in Glashütte. You can walk the town from end to end in 15 minutes, passing 10 watch companies along the way."



**6. WATCH PARTS AT NOMOS GLASHÜTTE**

"These companies manufacture everything in-house. They even make their own screws. I saw them weighing a tiny piece. If it's a fraction of a gram off, they pull it and build it again."



**8. WORKERS AT MORITZ GROSSMANN**

"You can do tours of these places and see people making watches. The desk height is pretty much at their chins, and they just sit there with tweezers and a loupe in one eye and make watches for eight hours a day. It's like being a surgeon. A lot of them described it to me as meditative."



**7. THE LANDSCAPE OUTSIDE OF GLASHÜTTE**

"Glashütte is one of many sleepy old towns in the area. You drive from one to the next on a pretty, winding road, going by castles and these huge fields and rolling green hills. On one really nice day, we saw motorcycle clubs driving around. It's very pastoral—I was surprised by how undeveloped it was."



**9. THE BACK OF A TIMEPIECE BY A. LANGE & SÖHNE**

"If you flip this watch over it's a whole galaxy, and it moves. Those are the stars as they actually align with the Earth's current position. And it's not a computer—it's totally mechanical."



**10. A WATCHMAKER AT MORITZ GROSSMANN**

"I think a lot of the millennials in Glashütte feel as I do. We fetishize the handmade because everything we grew up with was plastic. We feel disconnected from the things we use."