

PRESSEKIT for the International Travel Trade Show 2024 in Berlin from 5. to 7. March 2024



Discover the Altmark

Proud Cities. The Hanseatic Altmark – picturesque towns that transport you back to the Middle Ages

Those seeking wide open spaces strike gold in the Altmark. Discover a holiday region full of surprises. Small, charming Hanseatic towns. Historical personalities and magnificent manor houses. Theatre festivals and concerts. Green meadows and blue lakes. Tours by canoe and holidays on horseback. Farmers' markets and regional specialities.

Countryside Breaks Your Way

In the Altmark you can enjoy a picture book stay in the country- any way you choose. Sleep on hay, have breakfast at the farm, take a trip in a horse-drawn cart and breathe in the idyll- the possibilities are as individual as you are. A holiday in the Altmark is love for the countryside re-imagined.

Bounder through our Expanse of Green

Do you care to enjoy sporty exercise and experience unspoilt nature simultaneously? In the Altmark you can work off your energy and recharge your batteries in our vast, green expanse. The endless meadows, fields and waterscapes offer room for hikes, canoeing tours, horseback and (e-)bike rides. There is peace and quiet with yoga under the open sky, wellness and forest bathing. In the midst of this idyll, everyday life is far away.

From Farm to Plate

A holiday in the Altmark means enjoying meals with all your senses- food of best quality and regional. In farm shops and at farmers' markets you will find regional, seasonal fruit and vegetables. Local restaurants and cafés invite you in to unburden and feel at ease. Try typical Altmark dishes such as asparagus, Tiegelbraten (a type of stew) and Baumkuchen- made with farm-fresh ingredients.

Experience cultural history

The Altmark offers you both a cultural landscape and a stage for events. Stroll through romantic Hanseatic towns and magnificent gardens. Explore castles, manor houses and country estates in the footsteps of historical personalities. The Altmark also offers a lively cultural scene: experience art festivals, concerts and theatre.

If you have any further questions regarding these press releases, please contact:

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Proud Cities

The Hanseatic Altmark – picturesque towns that transport you back to the Middle Ages

Impressive gates, magnificent town halls, beautiful churches and imposing houses are all evidence of a time when the Altmark region was prosperous and prestigious. The powerful Hanseatic League was largely responsible for the growth of trade in the area between the 13th and 16th centuries. The north of Saxony-Anhalt has a greater concentration of Hanseatic towns than can be found anywhere else.

Seven proud towns not only formed a powerful group within the medieval Hanseatic League, but also stood together against the despotism and violence of the rulers of the independent German states. They are: Stendal, Gardelegen, Werben, Seehausen, Osterburg, Tangermünde and Salzwedel. Together with the town of Havelberg, they form the new Altmark Hanseatic league and have once again added the title “Hansestadt” (Hanseatic town) to their names.

In front of the historic town hall of Hansestadt Stendal, the statue of Roland is a symbol of the town’s medieval trading rights and town charter. In around 1160, the town was granted the right to hold markets and in the Middle Ages it was one of the 25 largest cities in Germany. The Brick Gothic architecture of northern Germany and a number of artistic masterpieces bear testament to this time. The town’s attractions for visitors include the two city gates, the Tangermünde gate and the Uenglinger gate, the High Gothic cathedral of St. Nicholas and, in the town hall, the oldest secular carved wooden paneling in Germany.

As its name suggests, Hansestadt Salzwedel in the north-western corner of the Altmark region owes its importance to the trade in salt (in German “Salz”). The town still retains its defensive walls from the Hanseatic era. They stretch for a distance of 1850 meters and have towers and two gates. The churches of St. Mary and St. Catherine also bear witness to the town’s architectural and artistic heyday. Instead of salt, the town now supplies sweet delicacies throughout Germany. Salzwedel has made a name for itself as a Hanseatic town and as the home of the Baumkuchen or tree cake.

In picturesque Tangermünde with its towers that can be seen from far away and its famous town hall with a Gothic facade, visitors feel as if they have stepped back in time to the Hanseatic era. This little town on the River Elbe is the perfect spot for anyone who loves the historic atmosphere of an old town surrounded by a perfectly preserved town wall. The Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV enjoyed staying here and the residents of Tangermünde are still grateful to him for making the town into his second official residence from 1373 to 1378, alongside his main court in Prague. They are proud to describe Tangermünde as an imperial and Hanseatic town.

In Hansestadt Havelberg, the cathedral of St. Mary towers over its surroundings. This impressive building, which was constructed from 1147 onward after the Wendish Crusades of Albert the Bear, the first margrave of Brandenburg, still inspires awe today. From the castle hill there is a wonderful view of the River Havel and the Middle Elbe Biosphere Reserve. At the foot of the hill, the old part of the town, which is located on an island in the river, is the perfect place for a peaceful stroll.

The Germans' favorite drink once provided jobs, good cheer and full purses in the south-west of the Altmark region. In the Middle Ages, Hansestadt Gardelegen became rich by exporting beer and hops. The statue of Roland outside the Gothic town hall and the churches of St. Mary and St. Nicholas all date back to this era. The ramparts, which form a green belt around the center of the town, were built for defensive purposes but are now one of the loveliest parks of the kind in Germany. They are part of the "Gartenträume – Historic Parks in Saxony-Anhalt" network.

Albert the Bear, from the House of Ascania, is responsible for founding Hansestadt Seehausen. After his Wendish Crusade, he brought Flemish colonists to the region in the 12th century to turn the marshy region into arable land. At its center, a flourishing town grew up with a church dedicated to St. Peter which has towers that are visible from a long way off. The entrance to the church is one of the most beautiful Romanesque brick portals in northern Germany.

The rustic charm of Hansestadt Osterburg appeals to visitors. Dating back over 850 years, it has a long history, an active present and a promising future. The buildings from the Hanseatic era include the churches of St. Nicholas and St. Martin. The English-style landscaped park of the former feudal estate of Krumke is home to one of the oldest box hedges in the world. The park is also part of the Gartenträume network.

Only a few hundred people live in Werben today. The residents therefore like to call it the smallest Hanseatic town in the world. But this picturesque town on the River Elbe has a long and rich history. In 1160, Margrave Albert the Bear founded the oldest hospice of the Knights Hospitaller in northern Germany here. The Elbe Gate and the Salt Church date back to the Hanseatic era. The little town's two main attractions for visitors are the Biedermeier Christmas market and the Biedermeier summer festival, which are held every year.

Anyone traveling on one of the eight Hanseatic routes in the Altmark will spot the traces of the area's historic past from a long way off. The region also has an active cultural scene, which includes organ and choir concerts in many of the beautiful churches. The Middle Elbe UNESCO biosphere reserve, the Drömpling biosphere reserve and the Arendsee Lake, also known as the "Altmark lake," offer unforgettable experiences of the natural world. The wide-open spaces provide peace and relaxation for residents and visitors alike. Visitors can find out more about the Altmark from the Altmark Aktiv app or at www.altmark.de.

Vast Landscapes Cycling Through Bismarck's Countryside

Some people's mouths water at the name, others think of the founder of the German Reich and controversial politician of the 19th century to this day. But Bismarck is more than herring fish or the "Iron Chancellor". For centuries, the Altmark was shaped by the old aristocratic family and vice versa. Visitors can trace Bismarck's footsteps across the countryside while experiencing adventures in nature, interesting discoveries, and surprising encounters.

The wide, untouched landscape of the Altmark simply begs for a discovery tour by bike. The Elbe Cycle Route, which runs through the region for almost 100 kilometres, is not the only place where cycling enthusiasts feel at home. Along the 500-kilometre Altmark circuit and many other idyllic routes, active tourists can enjoy the beauty of the vast landscape, learn much about the old noble Bismarck family, and meet its present-day representatives.

The starting point of a small round trip could be the Colbitz-Letzlinger Heide. At the edge of this once densely wooded area, this is where the Bismarcks stepped into the light of history. It was a great honour for the patrician family from Stendal to acquire Burgstall Castle. The elevation of their status, which was connected with the margravian privilege of July 15, 1345, made them knights of the Altmark nobility. Until the 16th century, the Bismarcks were part of the Altmark landed gentry. They lived removed from the big politics until the Prince-Elector of Brandenburg cast an eye on the rich hunting grounds. The family had to leave Burgstall. They received the estates of Krevese and Schönhausen in exchange. Today, one can only imagine the former splendour. What remains of the medieval castle is a hill surrounded by linden trees. The castle fell into disrepair. However, remains of the walls, which can be found in some places, and a tower foundation still bear witness to the glorious times. Later, a forestry commission office was erected there.

Festivals and concerts in the Renaissance manor house

It's a short bike ride from Burgstall to Birkholz. Even the name of the village promises a rural paradise. But the village near Tangerhütte offers more than quiet and seclusion. Famous artists come and go from the magnificent manor house. The events in the picturesque garden are of premier calibre. In keeping with the motto "culture in the open air", Carlotta and Martin von Gehren like to open their house in the summer for concerts as part of the "Altmark Festival" and also invite culture enthusiasts on other occasions. The building was erected in the 18th century on the site of a former moated castle. Later the estate came into the possession of Levin-Friedrich von Bismarck from Briest. A branch of the family has lived there for more than 600 years. The neighbouring village is quickly reached by bike through the forest. Time seems to stand still here. But a lot has happened recently. The chapel built in 1588 has just been renovated. The half-timbered church, like the newly renovated brewery, is part of the estate, which still shapes the village today. Maren von Bismarck, the owner, enjoys welcoming visitors to concerts and other events. The magnificent manor house from the 17th century is one of the most beautiful examples of North German Renaissance architecture. Situated on a pond, it is surrounded by a spacious English-style nature park. The ensemble is one stop in the state project "Garden Dreams – Historical Parks in Saxony-Anhalt".

From the residence of Emperor Charles IV to the birthplace of Otto von Bismarck

The tour continues on the Altmark circuit. Along the way, the "Delicacies of Charneux" lines one of the most beautiful pear tree avenues in Altmark. In the village of Welle, estate owner Britta Götz-Mohr has dedicated herself to the preservation of old, regional fruit varieties. As a descendent of the von Bismarck family, she returned to the homeland of her ancestors at the end of the 1990s and, together with her husband Christoph Mohr, turned the Bismarck estate into a refuge for her family and guests seeking tranquillity. With a series of events, she too turned the old family estate into a place for art and culture.

On the way to the next Bismarck town, the towers visible from afar entice visitors to take a detour to picturesque Tangermünde. Anyone who appreciates the romantic flair of a historic old town surrounded by a completely preserved city wall should take a break in the little town on the Elbe. Even Emperor Charles IV loved to lay his lordly head to rest there. The fact that he made the town a secondary residence to his headquarters in Prague from 1373 to 1378 is still appreciated by the people of Tangermünde today. They proudly call their town an imperial and Hanseatic city.

The view from the castle stretches far and wide over the Elbe meadows. North of the city, an imposing bridge leads to what is probably the best-known Bismarck site. In 1815, Otto von Bismarck was born in Schönhausen. The son of a country squire from Altmark and a Saxon diplomat's daughter, Otto von Bismarck later became one of the most important politicians of his time. As the "Iron Chancellor," Bismarck created the German Empire. In the town of his birth, visitors can go in search of traces of the figure who was revered by many, but who is still controversial today.

A "village living room" has become a creative place in the countryside

The Romanesque village church, where Otto von Bismarck was baptised, is a stop on the touristy Romanesque Road that runs through northern Saxony-Anhalt. The manor house where the "Iron Chancellor" was born was blown up in GDR times. The park and an outbuilding, which today houses the Bismarck Museum, have been preserved. In addition to Bismarck as a historical figure in politics, visitors can learn about his life as a pupil, student and husband. Back across the river, the ferry ride near Arneburg is a special experience. It takes a lot of pedalling to reach the next Bismarck village. But recreational cyclists who exercise regularly need not fear sore muscles. There are no mountains to climb and no obstacles to overcome. The path leads — far from busy roads — through the flat, wide countryside. Picturesque villages and contact with nature quickly make you forget the effort. This is probably the best leg of the route for experiencing the Altmark first hand.

It is a long way to Krevese, no matter which direction you come from. A visit to the village, which is now a district of the Hanseatic city of Osterburg, is worth your time. Rainer Kranz and Ralf Engelkamp, the imposing manor house's two owners who come from North Rhine-Westphalia, not only found a new home for themselves in the vastness of the Altmark. With their "village living room" in an outbuilding, they have also created a "creative place in the countryside" for locals and (other) visitors.

The estate was once home to an ancestor of the "Iron Chancellor" and all Bismarcks living today. His name was Friedrich. When Kranz and Engelkamp discovered the baroque manor house, it had been left to decay for years. In 2003, the two art designers bought the historic ensemble of castle, monastery Seite 6 |

6 storehouse and park, which they have since revitalized for residential purposes as well as for exhibitions and events. The Christmas market on the estate is legendary.



Since 1345: family traditions that are 19 generations old

And speaking of Christmas. Another descendant of the famous family can be found in Döbbelin. Ever since Alexander von Bismarck took possession of the estate again in 1991, he has been carrying on the family tradition there, now in its 19th generation. He and his family use the 18th century castle as their home. In the cellar, they run a small café and a very special store. In "Bismarck's Christmas World" there are many little things that celebrate the holiday season but are available throughout the year. Visitors can also explore the park. Every spring, the LebensArt exhibition shows trends in gardening, living and lifestyle.

The heart of the Altmark beats in the 1,000-year-old Hanseatic city of Stendal, which is considered the cradle of Brandenburg-Prussia. A well-preserved old town with two mighty city gates, the Uenglingen Gate and the Tangermünde Gate in the style of North German brick Gothic, as well as the market square with St. Mary's Church, bear witness to its rich history. In front of the imposing town hall, the statue of Roland proclaims the proud Hanseatic tradition. Trade has had a decisive influence on the town and one family has played a special part in it. In early documents of the Hanseatic City of Stendal, "de Bismarcks" appear as members of the powerful merchants' and garment tailors' guild. They belonged to the patricians, the constitutive citizens of the city. The first descendant of the family to make a name for himself was Claus von Bismarck around 1345. He clashed with the city authorities and the church and sided with the Margrave of Brandenburg. The fact that he was enfeoffed with Burgstall Castle in return, and thus elevated from a commoner to a nobleman, triggered a revolt that resulted in the expulsion of the family from the city. Stendal, the last stop, can be easily reached by ICE train from large cities, and brings the visit to the Altmark full circle.

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