

THE ALTMARK

A WORLD FOR YOU



DIE ALTMARK
GRÜNE WIESE
MIT ZUKUNFT



DIE ALTMARK



The Altmark – a world for you.

Dear readers,

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Beautiful views in Tangerhütte park

We would like to take you on a trip to the Altmark in the north of Saxony-Anhalt. On a journey into a world that is about the red bricks on the [Romanesque Road](#), about magnificent [Hanseatic towns](#) and uniquely preserved natural landscapes: in the glow of the sun, the blue of [Arendsee Lake](#) is dazzling and can be found in the [Drömling Biosphere Reserve](#) in the diverse play of nature's colours.

The [Green Belt](#) runs along the former inner-German border, its colour a reminder and symbol of the freedom that has evolved. The numerous rapeseed fields in the agricultural Altmark region gleam in a rich yellow. Hikers and riders meet on lonely forest paths. Canoeists pull their boats out of the water on the banks of the Elbe and rest on farm estates close to the cycling paths ...

This brochure reveals to you all the variety the Altmark has to offer: so if you are looking for new inspiration for a city trip, if you like hiking or cycling, if you enjoy concerts in Romanesque churches, or if you are interested in history and want to walk in the footsteps of "Iron Chancellor" Otto von Bismarck ... then you will find exactly what you are looking for in the Altmark.

Our map in the back cover shows a geographical overview of the Altmark. The stories on the next few pages are meant to inform you what you can experience here.

[Welcome to the Altmark – a world for you.](#)

And if it were true ...?

Legends and truth in the Altmark tourist region

And the wind whips the lake up in a wild rage, the beautiful mill crashes into the deep water gorge.

"Arend, look!" shouts the miller's wife suddenly in horror, turning pale they silently watch the mill they proudly built sink.

From: "Die versunkene Mühle am Arendsee" by Hermann Robolsky



The legend of the mill, which was swallowed by the lake water during a severe storm and thus gave its name to the [Arendsee](#) in the call of the miller's wife to her husband Arend, can be found in a collection of legends by the Brothers Grimm dating back to as early as 1813.

But is it really just a legend? – This much was assumed until divers actually found a millstone on the bottom of [Arendsee](#) Lake in 1983, almost 300 years after the accident in the November 1685. The legend was true. After an intensive search, a second millstone was even recovered in 2000.

Another legend tells how, after a devastating Elbe flood in the 15th century, the water supposedly rose so high that even [Stendal](#), which was far away from the Elbe, was flooded. Once water levels began to fall in St. Mary's church, a single fish was left behind which could be caught near the altar.

And then there's the story of the [imperial city Tangermünde](#), which just missed out twice on becoming the German capital.

That's the way it is in the Altmark, many things are hard to believe: the highest density of historical Hanseatic towns, a nationally recognised expertise in horse breeding and home of "Iron Chancellor" Otto von Bismarck – these are all attributes that apply to the region.



Over 300 years old: the millstone in the convent garden at Arendsee (top left). Many famous legends and fairy tales have been brought to life in a playful and loving manner at the fairytale park in Salzwedel (bottom left).



A Mississippi steamer in the Altmark? The "Queen" operates as an excursion boat on the Arendsee.

Legends can be experienced in real life in the Altmark. A tin fish in [St. Mary's church in Stendal](#) is a reminder of the former Elbe flood. It can still be found today if you look in the right place. And maybe one day [Tangermünde](#) will become the German capital after all. Unlikely? Certainly. And yet: the legendary millstones are now on exhibition in the garden of the convent ruins at [Arendsee](#).

meets the region's legends as well as modern fantasy figures like Pittiplatsch. All are staged with great attention to detail and colourfully prepared for all ages.

Colours seem to in fact spread a special magic. The legendary beauty of the Altmark is often attributed to its play of colours.

With all these legends, it is not surprising that a popular Altmark excursion destination is the [fairytale park in Salzwedel](#). Here the fairytale world of the Brothers Grimm



Little Venice and the medieval beer rebels

Towns and places in the Altmark

It must have been a very good beer that drove the Altmark Hanseatic towns to rebel 500 years ago. A new beer tax was to be paid for the aromatic brew from the region. The city rulers were not happy about this and so they were expelled from the Hanseatic League until 1518. But contemporary witnesses of that time can still be found in the Altmark towns today.

The settlement in the Altmark was initially influenced by agriculture. "Farming community towns" and villages with magnificent estates and farmhouses with large stables serve as a reminder to a time when farmers were responsible for the region's prosperity. As trade flourished in the Middle Ages, small market towns grew into larger trading towns. Eight of them were accepted into the powerful Hanseatic League: [Stendal](#), [Salzwedel](#), [Gardelegen](#), [Havelberg](#), [Tangermünde](#), [Osterburg](#), [Seehausen](#) and [Werben](#) still reveal their former wealth today – imposing townscapes, characterised by Low German half-timbered house architecture, Romanesque cultural monuments and magnificent Brick Gothic.



You will search in vain for such a beautifully overgrown bridge in Venice: bridge over the Jeetze in Little Venice, the Hanseatic town of Salzwedel (left).

The provost church of Salzwedel, home to the Danneil Museum (top right). Half-timbered houses from the largest Hanseatic town in the eastern Altmark, Stendal (bottom right).

Towns and places in the Altmark

THE HANSEATIC LEAGUE

The German Hanseatic League was a union of merchants from Lower Germany with the goal of asserting their business interests. The Altmark was represented in the Hanseatic League with eight towns – no other region can boast a similar density of Hanseatic towns. As the "Altmärkischer Städtebund" they demonstrated solidarity at Hanseatic League conventions.



The end of Altmark's Hanseatic glory days was initiated by revolts against the beer tax, as all Altmark towns were excluded from the Hanseatic League in 1518. In order to continue the tradition, seven Hanseatic towns and, from 2000 onward, the [Hanseatic town of Seehausen](#) joined together in the "[Altmärkischer Hansebund](#)". The eight "[Hansewege](#)" on the former trade routes can still be traveled and experienced today.

Each one of these towns is worth exploring – and so we start in [Stendal](#), the largest town in the Altmark. Two mighty city gates, the Hanseatic town hall and the third largest Roland statue in Germany as well as two monastery churches and four hall churches stand for its heyday in the Middle Ages, when Stendal was a rich merchant town. With its very well-preserved, characteristic brick buildings and town houses, the town is now on the [European Route of Brick Gothic](#).

In [Salzwedel](#) it was the salt trade and the weaving mill that made the city prosper in the Middle Ages. Richly equipped town houses characterise the townscape as do the three large town churches. The leaning tower of the St. Mary's church is the town's landmark.

Salzwedel is also called the "Little Venice of the North" with the half-timbered houses standing on oak piles, the winding alleys and bridges crossing the Jeetze River really reminding us of the Italian city of love. Large parts of the medieval wall ring have been preserved, as have the two city gates. The provost church with its richly decorated half-timbered facade, the knights' house, the terracotta house, the Old Mint and the Hansehof on the former harbour are well worth seeing.

CONTEMPORARY WITNESSES OF MEDIEVAL PROSPERITY

[Gardelegen](#) is famous for its aromatic beer today, just like in the time of the Hanseatic League, when it became a stumbling block. The town celebrated 700 years of the "Malzrecht" brewing law in 2014: worldwide export brought visible wealth to the town. The late Gothic town hall on the triangular town hall square, the two large town churches, the Roland statue and the Hospital St. Spiritus were built. The Salzwedel gate with its mighty battery towers is part of the rampart which surrounds the town centre like a green ring.

The town of [Tangermünde](#) sits enthroned just where the Tanger and Elbe rivers merge. The townscape is characterised by Emperor Charles IV's former castle, which he had chosen as his residence. Unfortunately, the castle fell victim to the Thirty Years' War. The castle, chapter and prison tower and the old chancellery have been preserved and extensively restored. An almost completely preserved city wall surrounds the town centre: you enter the town through the old town gates and immerse yourself in the atmosphere of an idyllic, medieval town.

[Osterburg](#) was built around two castles that once secured the town boundaries. Small alleys and half-timbered houses characterise the town centre's streets. The town is considered to be the "birthplace of German asparagus farming". Many of the asparagus varieties grown today were cultivated here.

[Seehausen's](#) landmark is the old parish church St. Peter's. Monuments of the Hanseatic period are the late Gothic Beustertor gate, the neo-Gothic town hall and the Ratskeller with its sandstone portal.

The smallest of the Hanseatic towns is [Werben](#), the city of mills. Up to eight of them once existed here, when grain farming flourished. The Bock windmill can still be visited today.

The eastern Elbe towns of Havelberg and Sandau have belonged to the Altmark since only the 20th century. Havelberg is situated picturesquely on an island in the middle of the Havel. The historical town centre is spread over the town island with the town church St. Lawrence and the hill of the historical cathedral district with the imposing, castle-like St. Mary's Cathedral.

Another gem in the Altmark is the town of [Arendsee](#) with its convent complex, popular outdoor swimming pool, excursion steamer and open-air stage. In the western Altmark, where far fewer settlements were granted town charter, towns such as Diesdorf, Apenburg, Mieste and Beetzendorf now have an urban character and are well worth seeing for tourists. And the beer? It still tastes just as good as back then ...



The Hansehof in Salzwedel is a lovingly restored former trading office (left).

The Elbtor gate in Werben is an imposing building from the glory days of the Hanseatic League (right).



Where life blossoms eternally

Rich landscaped gardens and wide parks

Tragedies take place behind the wrought-iron gate in the enchanted park among ginkgo trees and ancient beeches. The fate of a family is decided here, embedded into the scenery of a palace garden.

What viewers of the film "Das Bernstein-Amulett" (engl.: "The amber amulet") watched spellbound in 2004 was staged in the English landscaped garden at Krumke Palace in the Altmark. The eternal beauty of the castle garden can well be said to present a portrait of the generations who have passed through here.

Saxony-Anhalt is home to over 1,000 listed parks and gardens. 43 of them were selected for the monument preservation tourist network "[Garden Dreams – Historic Parks in Saxony-Anhalt](#)". Parks in the Altmark also belong to the Garden Dreams: the town walls in [Gardelegen](#), an over 2.5-km-long avenue of lime trees, which surrounds the old town like a green ring, and the [town park in Tangerhütte](#), an idyllic park with a magnificent castle and one very special gem: the ornamental cast iron pavilion.

The [Briest Manor Park](#) is a picturesque landscape garden with wide meadows and dense forests in an ensemble with a Renaissance castle, brewery, farmhouse and chapel. The most recent addition to the Garden Dreams can be found in the birthplace of Otto von Bismarck: the vast [Schönhausen Estate Park](#) was laid out in 1711 as a baroque pleasure garden.

Gardens which are privately owned can be visited with the events run by the "[Natur im Garten](#)" (engl.: "Nature in the garden") show garden network, initiated by the gAR-Tenakademie Sachsen-Anhalt e.V. in cooperation with the ART. Also worth seeing among the many other gardens and parks are the Baroque [boxwood garden in Kalbe](#), the largest of its kind in the Altmark, and the [monastery garden in Jerichow](#).

[Zichtau Estate](#) with its extensive parks, old trees, arboretum and many theme gardens is a popular destination for garden lovers, families and botanists. Hasso von Blücher acquired the estate in the 1990s and founded the "Stiftung Zukunft Altmark" (engl.: "Foundation Future of the Altmark"). You can see old farm gardens at the [Diesdorf open-air museum](#). Among the stately trees in the [Iden Estate Park](#) you will find rarities of boxwood varieties collected from all over the world.



The Garden Dreams park in Tangerhütte (left).

The popular film set of Krumke Palace and Garden Park is also a Garden Dreams park with a cavaliers' house and café, the orangery, the stone cabinet and baroque sculptures. Til Schweiger even shot parts of his "Klassentreffen 2.0" film here in 2019 (right).

Scattered beauties

Castles and manor houses in the Altmark

"You'd laugh at me if you were with me right now. For four weeks I have been sitting here in an old cursed castle, with a pointed arch and four-feet-thick walls, some 30 rooms, two of which are furnished, ... masses of rats, fireplaces in which the wind howls..."



Kunrau Palace was built in the 19th century based on the villa style in Berlin-Tiergarten. Today it is the centre for various cultural encounters and the starting point for hiking, cycling and adventure tours in and around the Drömling Biosphere Reserve.



Idyllically situated directly on the Elbe is where you will find Storkau Castle, faithfully restored and converted into an elegant 4* castle hotel. The restaurant is awarded with 14 Gault Millau points and offers specialities from its own estate with butcher's, cheese dairy, brewery and distillery.

Of course, 30-year-old Otto von Bismarck's unflattering quote is not directed at [Letzlingen Hunting Lodge](#) as depicted here, even though he was among the Prussian kings' guests, taking part in His Majesty's hunts. On the contrary – the hunting parties should have felt right at home here. Brandenburg's Crown Prince Johann Georg already discovered the Colbitz-Letzlinger Heide for hunting in the 16th century. Afterwards the region was a hunting ground for the Hohenzollern family for a long time until the castle finally fell into disrepair and was forgotten.

In addition to the Hohenzollern and Prussian kings, the buildings of other noble families still characterise the Altmark today. The bend between the Elbe and Havel rivers was formerly called Kattewinkel after the von Katte family. [Hohenkamern Estate](#) is still family-owned today. The ancestral seat of the von Katte family is in [Wust near Fischbeck](#) as is the family crypt, in which Hans-Hermann von Katte is buried, who was tragically executed in 1730 due to his loyalty to his childhood friend Frederick the Great. In [Calberwisch](#) and [Scharpenhufe](#) there are castles belonging to the von Jagow family. The ruins of the castle, which once belonged to the noble von Alvensleben family, can

King Frederick William IV of Prussia had today's Letzlingen hunting lodge built in the Tudor style in the middle of the 19th century on the ruins of the old hunting castle (left).

be seen in [Kalbe](#). The [keep in Apenburg](#) is an impressive reminder of the ancestral seat of the von der Schulenburg family. The roots of the Altmark branch of the von dem Kneesebeck family can be found in [Tylsen](#) near Salzwedel.

Anyone searching for a special venue for celebrations, receptions or for a wedding is highly recommended to check out [Krumke Palace](#) and the [Tangerhütte New Palace](#) with their beautiful, surrounding parks – the same applies to [Storkau Castle](#), the [Event Castle Schönfeld](#) and [Schloss Tangermünde](#), which also offer first-class catering and guest rooms. The stately [Büttnershof](#), [Hohenberg-Krusemark](#) and [Scharpenhufe](#) manor houses accommodate bed and breakfasts in a rustic, rural estate setting.

And where did the later Iron Chancellor lament so vehemently about unfurnished rooms, rats and wind? It was [Schönhausen Castle](#), one of the von Bismarck family's properties in the Altmark. The building has not been preserved, except for one part containing the Bismarck Museum. Instead there are the Bismarck family's castles in [Döbbelin](#) and [Briest](#), the [Welle Manor House](#) and the [Krevese Stately Home](#) – where it is guaranteed not to be draughty any more.

"See red" on the Romanesque Road

Churches, monasteries and the magic of bricks

Thomas Hartwig covered 7,500 kilometres on his bicycle in summer 2011. He visited 515 churches, wore out three chains, broke two sprockets, bent wheel axles on cobblestones – but the result is unique: his church guide reflects his enthusiasm for the Altmark churches.

To be read in: "Alle Altmarkkirchen von A bis Z" with 523 Altmark churches, by Thomas Hartwig, Elbe-Havel-Verlag



The Altmark is a land of churches and monasteries. It is said that the Altmark is the region with the highest density of churches in Germany. More than 400 can be read about, with church ruins even over 500, over an area of about 5,000 km². The reason for the large number of churches is the conversion of the Slavs to Christianity in the early Middle Ages: the ruling princes determined that every village, no matter how small, should have its own place of worship.

With over 200 Romanesque churches, the Altmark also has one of the densest Romanesque networks in Germany. The oldest among them are the up to 1,000-year-old fieldstone churches, such as the village churches in [Möringen](#), [Wiepke](#), [Engersen](#), [Rohrberg](#), [Staffelde](#), [Arnim](#) and [Döbbelin](#). Romanesque brick churches worth seeing can be found in the villages [Melkow](#), [Beuster](#), [Schönhausen](#), [Redekin](#) and in the town [Sandau](#), among others.

The northernmost point of the Romanesque Road in Saxony-Anhalt is the Benedictine convent in Arendsee (left). The ruins of the convent buildings border on the preserved convent church, in a splendid location directly on the lake.

The parish church St. Lawrence/St. Nicholas in Sandau an der Elbe is a prime example of the simple beauty of Romanesque architecture (right).



THE ROMANESQUE ROAD

The [Romanesque Road](#) is a 1,000-km-long tourism route through Saxony-Anhalt and is part of the [Transromanica European Cultural Route](#) at the same time. The Altmark region, which is rich in Romanesque buildings, forms the northern route and contributes 16 stations in total. The route is to be understood as a red thread that connects the castles, monasteries and churches that were built from the 10th to the 13th century in the Romanesque style.

The Altmark's monastery churches along the [Romanesque Road](#) such as the [St. Mary and Curies' Augustinian convents](#) in [Diesdorf](#) are impressive. One of the earliest and unchanged Romanesque monasteries can be found in [Jerichow](#) in the Jerichower Land administrative district bordering the Altmark to the east.

The great Altmark town churches on the [Romanesque Road](#) include the [St. Lawrence parish church](#) in [Salzwedel](#), the [St. Mary's cathedral](#) in [Havelberg](#) and the [town church of Jerichow](#). The two large [Stendal town churches of St. Mary](#) and [St. Nicholas' Cathedral](#), which were built in the Middle Ages, are highly regarded by tourists and art historians alike. Marvel at the magnificent medieval windows in [St. Nicholas](#): the huge, mostly original glazed windows with more than 1,000 panes illustrate the life of Jesus.

You don't need to visit all 515 churches in the Altmark. But they are all worth seeing. And they are not only accessible by bike, but also by train or car. After all, the church guide has already been written ...

As exceptional as the country – the people from the Altmark

In the footsteps of Winckelmann, Reutter and Bismarck

It is important for outsiders to know that the people from the Altmark, the Altmarkers, are a special breed of people. [...] Down-to-earth people who are very friendly a moment later. [...] The Altmarkers are like a tiled stove, they warm up very slowly but when they do, they really roar.



This declaration of love made by the district administrator Michael Ziche as part of his speech on the "20 years of the Altmark District of Salzwedel" anniversary in the year 2014 is as exceptional as the Altmarkers themselves. They are a breed of people very attached to their home, shaped by rural life. Influences from the big cities bounce off the region and people: the heart of the Altmark beats to the rhythm of nature and its seasons. Hectic is a foreign word for Altmarkers.

The most famous Altmarker is without a doubt "Iron Chancellor" [Otto von Bismarck](#), born in Schönhausen (Elbe). The first Chancellor of the German Reich, a visionary somewhere between a genius and barbarian, is said to have been a contradictory strong-headed character. Perhaps his foresight as well as his stubbornness were greatly influenced by the Altmark. There is actually some evidence of this, after all, Bismarck was an avowed Altmarker all his life. The Altmark history of the Bismarck family began in 1270 in Stendal and is on display at the tourist "[Bismarck Route](#)" today. There are still disputes to this day as to whether the place gave the family its name or if the family gave the place its name. In any case, the dynasty's roots lie in the Altmark, whether it's in the town of Bismarck itself or in Schönhausen, everyone can decide for themselves.

The garden of the Jenny-Marx-Haus in Salzwedel with a town landmark in the background: St. Mary's church with its characteristic, 80-metre-high, slightly curved tower.



Originating from Schleswig-Holstein but long since an Altmarker again: Alexander von Bismarck in front of the family's restored castle in Döbbelin near Stendal.

FROM ARTISTS, RESEARCHERS, VARIETY STARS AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

[Theodor Fontane](#) also praised the vast land of the Altmark. In 1859 he wandered through the region, his impressions are integrated into the "Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg" (Ramblings through Brandenburg) and into his master short story "Grete Minde – Nach einer altmärkischen Chronik" (Grete Minde – Based on an Altmark Chronology).

The son of the town of Stendal [Johann Joachim Winckelmann](#) achieved world fame as a founder of classical archaeology and art history.

The findings by the historian [Johann Friedrich Danneil](#), who derived the classification of prehistory into Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age from excavations near Salzwedel, were also groundbreaking for archaeology.

The region has also produced popular entertainers: the songwriter [Otto Reutter](#), born in Gardelegen. He was the star of the Berlin Varieté in the Golden Twenties. And who would have thought that "Derrick" gained his first experience on the stage in the Altmark? [Horst Tappert](#) started his acting career at the Stendal Theatre. [Anett Louisan](#), who now lives in Berlin and whose musical talent has been honoured with the ECHO and the Golden Tuning Fork, was also born in Havelberg in the Altmark region.

The magic of the people here is only revealed "when the tiled stove roars". A down-to-earth attitude paired with creative determination distinguished all the famous people from the Altmark. So it's not surprising then, that [Jenny Marx](#), the wife of Karl Marx and one of the pioneers of women's rights, also came from Salzwedel.

The secret of the Trojan horse

The "Treasury of the Mark" – museums and art treasures

Colourful caves to hide in, a labyrinth in the garden and interactive puzzles – sounds like a modern theme park? While that's certainly true, it's also the childrens floor of the Winckelmann-Museum in Stendal.

"An unusual richness, [...] simply humongous," enthuses art historian Peter Knüvener when he talks about the Altmark. The art treasures include architectural monuments from the Romanesque and Gothic periods, as well as the interior design of churches, monasteries and town halls. What is truly special is the outstanding condition of the art treasures, for even Catholic insignia had been preserved after the Reformation.

The two large collections on regional history can be found in the [St. Catherine's convent in Stendal](#) and in the [Danneil Museum in Salzwedel provost](#). The [Langoards workshop in Zethlingen](#) vividly depicts village life 2,000 years ago. Similarly authentic insights can be obtained in [Diesdorf](#) at the six-hectare-large, oldest folklore

[open-air museum](#) in Germany. The lifestyle and work from three centuries are brought to life with many opportunities to participate in and events surrounded by historic farmhouses and gardens.

If you want to immerse yourself even further in regional history, the [Prignitz-Museum in Havelberg](#) or the [Tangermünde, Gardelegen or Osterburg museums](#) are highly recommended.

The museums dedicated to the famous sons of the Altmark mainly attract national and international interest. The [Bismarck Museum in Schönhausen](#) presents an exhibition on the first German Chancellor's life and work.

At the Winckelmann-Museum in Stendal, the International Winckelmann Society curates the permanent exhibition on the life and work of Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768), the founder of modern archaeology and art history. In the "8,000 years of art – the Mäzenaten-Museum" exhibition area, there are top-class works of art to discover, while the family museum offers the interactive "Under the volcano" experience. Special exhibitions are shown several times a year, often with international involvement. And finally, the sculpture courtyard invites you to explore and pass the time.

There is all sorts to discover at the open-air museum in Diesdorf (left).

Alluding to Winckelmann's preference for the Greek poet Homer, the largest Trojan horse in the world, which can also be climbed, stands in the Winckelmann-Museum and is a highlight for younger museum visitors (right).





Tales of vibrato and shaking cathedral windows

Perfectly staged: music and theatre in the Altmark

All senses are focused on the voice. The aria fills the cathedral, the sound echoes from the old walls. The soprano's vibrato can be felt deep inside you and makes the cathedral's stained glass windows shake.

The concert guests listen as if spellbound to the soloist at the pulpit, pressed into their seats by the voice, while the conductor leads the orchestra and choir through the music. A concert in the Stendal cathedral is an extraordinary acoustic experience.

Musical experiences like this can be found throughout the Altmark all year round. The [Altmärkisches Musikfest](#) plays in churches, libraries, open-air stages and concert halls throughout the Altmark in summer. The summer concerts in the [Stendal Cathedral](#), the concerts in the [Music Forum at St. Catherine's church in Stendal](#) and on the historical Scherer organ in the [St. Stephen's church in Tangermünde](#) as well as the [Kreves Organ Summer](#) and the [Meßdorf Music Festival](#) are among the highlights for classical music lovers. The [MDR Music Summer](#) also makes guest appearances at various venues in the region and the [Altmark Festival](#) transforms castles and manor houses, barns and Romanesque fieldstone churches into concert halls.

The [Wagen & Winnen](#) art and culture festival shows the diversity of the Altmark's artistic gems: amazing and extraordinary arts & crafts, music and performances. What art and culture can set in motion is also shown by the [artists' town of Kalbe](#): here, in the city of 100 bridges, empty houses are turned into studios and exhibition rooms. Large and small festivals, concerts and theatre productions also liven up the town all year round.

Concert in Stendal St. Nicholas' Cathedral (left).

Faust production at the Theater der Altmark (TdA, right): the TdA productions are performed in the theatre building in Stendal, but also at guest venues such as the Stendal Gerberhof and in the convent ruins of Arendsee.

One of the most important cultural institutions in the region is the [Theater der Altmark](#) (TdA). The in-house ensemble of renowned actors offers a broad repertoire ranging from classics to contemporary dramas, operas and musicals. The [Junges TdA](#) (engl.: Young TdA) addresses children directly with its own plays and the TdA [Bürgerbühne](#) (engl.: Citizens' stage) sees itself as a cooperation space for anyone who wants to bring ideas, plays and formats onto the stage themselves. The TdA's open-air midsummer nights in [Stendal's Gerberhof](#) and on the [open-air stage at the Arendsee convent](#) are also incredibly popular.

Voices and singing are completely different there than from the pulpit in Stendal Cathedral. But no less magical. You can feel it deep inside ...



Washed with all waters

The Blue Belt in the Altmark

The sun is still battling against the morning fog hanging over the water in wisps. Hands silently lift the binoculars in front of your eyes. Your gaze is directed along the ranger's stretched out arm, whose other hand is indicating: no hectic movements now, no noise. And yes indeed: there he is, the sea eagle, sitting on the branches of the autumnal bare willow on the shore of the shallow water zone in Drömling Biosphere Reserve.



In the Drömling Biosphere Reserve, young visitors can either search for the sea eagle in the shallow water zone (right) or for everything that this kind of moor pond has to offer (above).



Not only sea eagles feel comfortable by the water in the Altmark, as the region is literally "washed with all waters" in the truest sense of the word and is an important part of the **Blue Belt**, Saxony-Anhalt's water tourism network.

The Elbe flows majestically at the feet of the imperial city of **Tangermünde**. Its waters gleefully play around the jetty heads, where anglers try their luck surrounded by the lush green Elbe meadows. Barges and an excursion boat pass by, briefly accompanied by a rowing eight.

A little further north, the Elbe joins the Havel, which not only brings water from Brandenburg and Berlin near **Havelberg**, but also many cyclists who are swapping from the **Havel** to the **Elbe cycle path**.

The smaller flowing waters of the Altmark, such as the romantic Milde or the Biese, are more intimate. Paddlers and visitors to the old town can try their hand at bridge counting in **Kalbe**. We are not going to reveal how many of them actually span the Milde here.

Still waters run deep – another saying that is very true in the Altmark. The **Arendsee** is the largest lake in the region and one of the deepest in North Germany at up to 50 metres. It was not formed as a sinkhole at the end of the last ice age, but by a salt dome. Here you can come across canoeists, sailors, divers, anglers and of course the Queen, a paddle and excursion steamer with a floating registry office. However, it is only the largest of a multitude of beautiful swimming lakes in the entire Altmark.

Whether it's still waters, deep lakes or running waters – the inhabitants and visitors to the Altmark will find the right water for all weathers. As for the sea eagle, the waters will always remain a hunting ground.

How the cathedral of the Hanseatic town of Havelberg shapes the townscape can be experienced from a canoe. While circling the old town island surrounded by the Havel river, the cathedral usually sits enthroned within sight (left).





Freedom now starts where it used to stop.

The Green Belt – from deadly no man's land to paradise

It's still quiet here. But the atmosphere makes all the difference. Where no one could move freely and silence meant death until 1989, nature has now reclaimed its space. Migratory birds rest in the Elbe–Altmark–Wendland quadripoint, where it used to be impossible to move any further.

The former Iron Curtain between the East and West, which stretched across the whole of Europe, is now the **Green Belt**, a habitat for animals and plants and a recreational area for people. The inner-German border in the Altmark has been turned into a peaceful strip between the federal states of Lower Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt and one of the largest nature conservation projects in Europe.

The **Green Belt** is really recognisable as such in many places and it is a triumph of freedom that hikers, cyclists and horse riders can all move today where minefields used to prohibit all travel. A special place that reminds us of a bygone time that must not be forgotten.

The peaceful silence has an impact which is all the more impressive today. Foxes, eagles and deer have found their homes here. People adapt: the **Green Belt** can be found in the Altmark, for example, on parts of the **Four State Border cycle path** by bicycle, on a horse riding trip or while boat-

ing on the Elbe – whether it's near **Diesdorf** in the west, in the woods north of the **Arendsee** or in the **Elbe valley meadows in the state quadripoint**.

Not far from there is where warning signs begin to appear quite suddenly. Old watchtowers for the GDR border troops and remains of demolished settlements in the immediate vicinity of the former inner-German border. Anyone taking a break here is close on the trail of freedom. Today the aim is for it to be ridden, cycled and hiked upon.

Young horse riders enjoying the freedom of nature and space on a hack. The former death strip can still be clearly seen as a Green Belt at Wirler Spitze north of Arendsee (left).

On the Green Belt: decaying watchtower for the GDR border troops near the village of Jeebel (right).



The wonderful difficulty of having to decide

Cycling in the Altmark

The captain of the small shuttle ferry pulls up the ramp and sets off towards the western bank of the Elbe. The colourful jackets of the twelve cyclists shine brightly in the midday sun. The cashier distributes the tickets, which look like cinema tickets from olden times, for a small fee. The cyclists cross the Elbe near Sandau. Totally different paths through the Altmark cycling region lie ahead of them.



One of the highlights of the Havel cycle path is the Hanseatic town of Havelberg with its cathedral and the House of Rivers (above, the Middle Elbe Biosphere Reserve information centre).



Megalithic sites or large stone graves were built about 5,000 years ago. There are 43 of them in the Altmark district of Salzwedel alone. Some of them can be discovered on the Altmark circular trail.

The **Elbe cycle path** is one of the most popular cycle paths in Germany. It is often said that the part leading through the Altmark is one of the most beautiful.

And it is in fact an uplifting moment cycling through the medieval imperial town of Tangermünde high above the Elbe. The redbrick Romanesque town panorama, which rises above the Elbe's floodplains and lush green meadows, is one of the most beautiful impressions the Altmark has to offer.

Cyclists have the privilege of using the path that gets you closest to the Altmark: the **Altmark circular trail** connects all corners of the region to each other, covering a distance of about 500 kilometres. The trail is divided into ten stages and is lined with well-equipped accommodation and refreshment facilities. Which will be your favourites: the **Hanseatic towns**, the **UNESCO biosphere reserve of the Elbe river landscape** or the **Colbitz-Letzlinger Heide** and the **Drömling biosphere reserve** with its fascinating natural landscapes? Try the apple and cherry varieties in the western Altmark orchard around **Diesdorf** or explore the forests around **Klötze** and the **Zichtau mountains**. Let us guide you by GPS to the insider tips for the Altmark.

The Altmark circular trail leads cyclists through historic towns, idyllic villages and offers wonderful views. Left: View from the dike to Tangermünde castle.

Cyclists on the **Altmark circular trail** have to be able to make decisions. Near Salzwedel an exciting route leads to the **Green Belt** in the area of the former inner-German border. The **Milde-Biese-Aland tour** connects **Letzlingen** in the south to the **Arendsee** in the north and opens up the geographical heart of the Altmark with the resort of **Kalbe** and its moated castle. The **Hanseatic town of Havelberg** is the link to the **Havel cycle path**, which takes cyclists to and from Potsdam and Berlin. And there are many more paths on which you can get closer to the secrets of the Altmark by bike.

Our cyclists roll off the ferry, cross the Elbe dike and reach the nearby Büttnershof manor house, where they all take their lunch break together. Which path they will take afterwards, we don't know. We only know there are virtually unlimited possibilities.

On the film set of reality

Magical hiking and riding in the Altmark

Hikers and horse riders sit together round the fire in the evening. The owner of the riding stables has taken care of the horses in the guest boxes and is now playing his own compositions on the guitar for the guests. Dinner will soon be served at wooden tables.

What sounds like a scene from a film is reality in the Altmark. Anyone setting off on a search, will experience many such scenes on horseback or on foot.

In the award-winning "horse-friendly region" of the Altmark there are more than 200 riding routes over about 1,600 kilometres through the countryside. There's the [Elbe-Havel Trail](#) that leads as far as Brandenburg, the [Altmark Trail](#) along the treasures of the region, the [Farm Trail](#) or the [Castle Trail](#). The liberal field and forest regulations set hardly any limits for freedom-loving riders. The about 40 riding stables offering carriage rides, holidays in horse-drawn caravans, Western and trekking rides, vaulting and therapeutic riding can become your very own personal film set.

Or how about a workshop with a horse whisperer – not Robert Redford, but a real one ...

The roots of the [Altmark horse-riding country](#) go far back. Horse breeding has been practiced here with an outstanding reputation for more than 100 years. Highly competent breeders follow a modern stallion genealogy, thus ensuring the beauty and noble lineage of the Altmark horses, which thousands of people see for themselves every year at the [Havelberger Pferdemarkt](#), the largest utility horse market in Germany. Horse shows, tournaments and riding festivals take place throughout the region, such as the [Krumke Horse Days](#) or the eventing tournaments in [Hohenberg-Krusemark](#) and [Engersen](#).



Anyone who prefers travelling on foot, has the ideal hiking conditions on offer with smooth paths, gentle hills and soft forest floors: numerous places in the Altmark offer nature and themed routes to the [Elbe floodplains](#), through the [Colbitz-Letzlinger Heide](#) to the forests in "Altmark's Switzerland", the [Drömling Biosphere Reserve](#) and the [Zichtau mountains](#).

And when hikers see riders taking a refreshing dip on horseback at Arendsee and think: "This is just like a wonderful scene from a film," then they have arrived in the Altmark.

A special kind of fun at the horse pool on the northern shore of the Arendsee (above); there is plenty of room to gallop on the Wirler Spitze dunes (right) and a great deal to discover for hikers and young explorers (left).



The difference between liquid and solid gold

Culinary specialties from the Altmark

The golden yellow dough is baked into new "Baumkuchen" cakes (engl.: literally "tree-cake") on the long axes rotating in front of the open fire. The baker pours the dough made from a secret recipe out of his ladle time and time again. Layer by layer, a new delicious roll emerges, which Salzwedel is famous for.

The traditional businesses in the **Baumkuchen town of Salzwedel** have friends all over the world. The cake is shipped as far as India or Australia. The first rule is always: it has to be cut fresh and eaten quickly. The latter is the least of the problems with this **king of cakes**. How long it needs to travel so far, is no longer in the hands of bakeries ...

Elsewhere in the western Altmark liquid gold is produced. The rich gardens around Diesdorf have always given fruit growers the best harvests. That is why today's cider makers can offer excellent **juices** in every variety. The golden apple juice is of course the most important. Nowhere else does the Altmark taste fresher.

The **Hanseatic town of Osterburg** gets its nickname from a **fine vegetable**. The **asparagus town** is named after the famous asparagus grower August Huchel, who founded the first German asparagus breeding company here. The region is still famous for its excellent asparagus today. The town dedicates the annual **asparagus festival** to the tasty, healthy sticks and there has also been an Asparagus Queen for almost 20 years. Whether she's more beautiful than the Baumkuchen Queen from Salzwedel, is a matter of personal choice.

There is no Whitefish Queen but **whitefish** can easily be called the queen of the Arendsee. Some people say that the unmistakable taste of the delicious fish is typical of the Altmark. Best prepared directly from the water in the pan or still warm from smokehouses ...

The region offers other extraordinary specialties, such as the traditional **Altmark Hochzeitssuppe** (wedding soup) or the **Seehaus Römerbraten** (Roman roast), the **Tangermünde Kuhschwanzbier** (cow's tail beer) not in serious competition with the **Stendal Taubentanz** (dove's dance) beer. At the end of the day, it is a question of personal preferences whether the liquid or solid gold becomes your favourite. One thing is certain though, the Altmark caters to all tastes.

A Salzwedel Baumkuchen is baked over an open fire (left).

Anyone who prefers things a bit more full-bodied should try the fruit brandies from the experienced distilleries in and around Diesdorf. Even whisky and gin are now produced here – with a wonderful golden yellow colour, of course (right).



When the imperial couple enters Tangermünde ...

Folk festivals and Altmark gastronomy

The imperial couple, on horseback, dressed in the finest robes, enters the old imperial and Hanseatic town of Tangermünde and greets the cheering people with their hearts full of joy.



"But then, what a thunderstorm! The dye from my feather headdress ran along my cheeks. My companion, the Emperor, looked more like an Indian than a proud Charles IV. In addition, the velvet costumes soaked up the water so I was subjected to the weight of my four-metre-long cape and could hardly get off the horse," a businesswoman from Tangermünde remembers her appearance as the Empress at the castle festival.

But the Altmarkers are not discouraged by something like that. Some of the region's traditional festivals have been celebrated for centuries. And if it should rain at the **Tangermünde castle festival**, then it will be beautiful again at the **Stendal Roland festival**. They are both part of the colourful town and castle festivals, where the focus is on medieval life.

The Hanseatic town of Havelberg has hosted the largest folk festival in Saxony-Anhalt's beautiful north since 1750. The **horse market** attracts up to 200,000 people annually.

The many festivals as part of the **Altmark Farm Weeks** are an expression of the Altmarkers' attachment to their rural homeland. From May to October visitors can get a sense of how the Altmark ticks at the **Steinfeld farmer's market** the **Nysfest** in Salzwedel or the **Castle festival in Kunrau**, to name just three examples of more than 200 festivals.



Rustic dishes for connoisseurs at the Zecherei in Tangermünde (top) – the Altmark's gastronomy impresses with its regional variety of products (bottom).



The imperial couple's procession at the castle festival in Tangermünde

This can be perfectly combined with a tour through the Altmark's gastronomy. There are even special events dedicated to the region's specialities, such as the **Anglers' festival in Gardelegen** or the **asparagus festival in Osterburg**. The best regional recipes can be tasted in the region's local eateries. The Altmark is famous and popular for its regional cuisine. Young, fresh catering concepts are now establishing themselves alongside the traditional restaurants, which cook according to original recipes but also serve innovatively interpreted dishes. There are many insider tips behind the "Altmärker Kulinarium" seal.

And who knows, maybe in the evening you'll be sitting in the restaurant next to the, the (in the meantime long since dry) Empress.



Impressions of the Cathedral Festival in the Hanseatic town of Havelberg

THE ALTMARK

Business location & region with high quality of living



Old Hanseatic towns, picturesque villages, vast landscapes, fields and meadows characterise the Altmark region's image. But the Altmark offers much more besides this rural charm: geographically situated in the heart of Germany, with an area of just under 5,000 km², the region offers excellent conditions as a business location as well as a living environment with an infrastructure that meets high standards of quality of life.



THE ALTMARK'S ECONOMY

The Altmark offers entrepreneurs a future: attractive locations and great potential commercial space are just two arguments for new settlements and company founders to become part of a growing economic region.

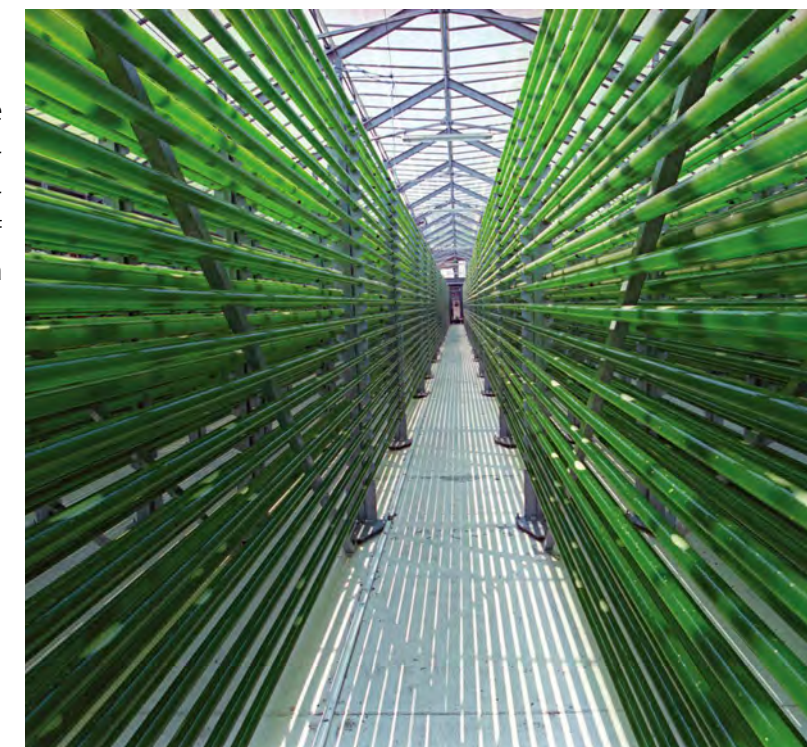
The Altmark's economic development potential mainly lies in the manufacturing and service industries, especially due to its proximity to important economic areas in northern and eastern Germany and short distances to the greater areas of Berlin, Hamburg and Hanover. The region is home to about 10,000 companies, which are attributed to the Chamber of Industry and Commerce, and about 3,000 craft businesses. Agriculture also plays an important part in the traditionally rural Altmark.

Other important sectors include the food industry, vehicle construction and mechanical engineering, the processing of renewable raw materials, metal processing, glass production and, increasingly, the energy industry.

The backbone of regional value creation is the large number of small and medium-sized enterprises in the crafts and service trades. The tourism industry in particular is benefiting from the continuing trend towards nature and active holidays. Thanks to its natural advantages, the Altmark's locational advantages include efficient agricultural businesses and a significant forestry potential.

In many places, pastures and meadows characterise the region's charming landscape and form the basis for successful animal breeding. Apart from pigs, sheep and poultry, cattle are also kept. Due to the extensive tradition of cattle farming, it is not surprising that the milk yield from local farms is among the highest in Germany.

In addition to the production of high-quality food and raw materials, agricultural employees make a valuable contribution to the maintenance of the cultural landscape.



Rural, historical towns, agricultural and forestry areas are characteristic with a share of 90% (left).

Agriculture plays an important part in the Altmark (top right).

Microalgae from Klötze are sold worldwide – a pioneer in the field of bioeconomics (bottom right).

INFRASTRUCTURAL LINKS

The north extension of the A14 motorway will further improve transport links to the Altmark. There is already a very good rail connection, including a direct connection from Berlin via Stendal, Salzwedel, Uelzen, Lüneburg to Hamburg, but also to southern Germany. With the expansion of the A14 motorway (Magdeburg-Schwerin), the Altmark will be connected to the greater motorway network, which is an important factor for its economic development. Commuters will also benefit from the expansion. Currently they can get from Stendal to Braunschweig and Magdeburg in less than two hours, and to Hanover in just over two hours. Travel is even faster with the ICE: you can reach Berlin's

main train station from Stendal in 46 minutes. Wolfsburg can also be reached by train from Stendal and Gardelegen in about 30 minutes each.

The Altmark can be passed through on the Elbe and Havel waterways. It can also be reached by air from the Stendal-Borstel airfield.

One thing's for sure: we are prepared for economic challenges since future paths aren't simply considered, but actively pursued and developed in the Altmark – with full steam ahead.

SUCCESS AND CAREERS

The Altmark gives you self-confidence because it offers great and varied opportunities for career starters as well as for students.

Entrepreneurs from the Altmark are always keen to find, retain and further develop the best junior staff and specialists to be able to survive in competition. Direct contact with students, graduates and specialists is fostered at numerous events and trade fairs. Trainees acquire the necessary qualifications at the vocational colleges in Stendal or Salzwedel as well as at private education academies. A part-time bachelor's degree in business administration or other academic higher education courses at the

Magdeburg-Stendal University of Applied Sciences also ensure the availability of qualified specialists.

The Magdeburg-Stendal University of Applied Sciences promotes its range of innovative courses of study with a high international dimension under the slogan "Studying in Green Surroundings". The research offers are broadly based: research and development projects are carried out in the fields of engineering, economics, health, social and communication sciences. The still relatively young university impresses with modern equipment on all levels. From computer technology, seminar rooms and lecture halls to the library.

In addition, students choose Stendal as a place to study because of its attractive cost of living, short distances, unspoilt countryside and recreational environment with excellent links to the major cities of Berlin, Hanover, Hamburg, Magdeburg... Under the motto "Live the way you study", students can also rent apartments directly on campus.

Various educational institutions in the Altmark such as the Magdeburg-Stendal University of Applied Sciences (in picture: location in Stendal) offer excellent prospects and opportunities.



LIVING & HOUSING IN THE ALTMARK

The Altmark is a cultural landscape that has grown over centuries, whose special attractiveness is made up of idyllically situated villages and towns as well as the vast, flat landscape. About half of the total population lives in the 15 small and medium-sized towns: natural rural life with less exposure to noise or air pollution provides a high quality of life for both families and seniors. A strong social fabric of neighbourhood assistance, voluntary work and active associations and clubs enrich the social life and contrast with the anonymity of large cities. More and more people who are tired of big city life and who are returning appreciate the slower pace compared to hectic life in urban spaces complete with sensory overload and choose the Altmark as a new place to live.

The dream of your own home is one that can be fulfilled in the Altmark: in 2018, the average purchasing price for building plots in the Altmark district of Salzwedel ready for development was EUR 25 per m² and EUR 29 per m² in the administrative district of Stendal (Property Market Report 2019).

Rents are also in very favourable ranges compared to the rest of Germany: for example, the average rent in Stendal is EUR 5.48 per m² and EUR 5.01 per m² in Salzwedel.

FAMILY LIFE IN THE ALTMARK

The Altmark offers ideal conditions, especially for families, to reconcile professional plans with ideal childcare: the Altmark region has a wide network of daycare facilities with more than 200 nurseries. Special kindergarten models such as the forest kindergarten or the "On the Farm" kindergarten are also available. There are childcare facilities at crèches or with a childminder for the youngest. Extensive renovations and high investments have been made in the schools in the Altmark, resulting in very well-equipped schools all over the Altmark today. In addition to the state schools, there are also schools run by the church as well as Montessori and private schools, including bilingual teaching concepts.

The just under 198,000 inhabitants (as at end of 2018) in the Altmark live in two districts and in 11 single and four association municipalities.

Other educational offers can be taken up at the towns and districts' art and music schools and adult education centres.

A large number of clubs offer a variety of activities for all ages, including various sports from football to gliding, from athletics to stand up paddling or horse riding. But cultural offers of theatre and museum education, choirs, carnival, local history and history associations and much more are also provided for a variety of leisure activities.

LUXURY OF EMPTINESS

Vacant properties and unused brownfield sites are offered under the "Luxus der Leere" (Luxury of Emptiness) brand: commercial properties, residential properties, former farmhouses – there is a wide range of properties awaiting new use.

BROADBAND PROVISION

Currently, the fibre optic network is being expanded on a large-scale throughout the Altmark, since fibre optic connections are the technology of the future and enhance the quality of life, especially in rural regions.





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ALTMÄRKISCHER REGIONALMARKETING- UND TOURISMUSVERBAND (ART)

In addition to organising and securing comprehensive regional marketing, promoting the development of tourism and the attractiveness of the Altmark region and its municipalities both internally and externally, coordinating and bundling activities in tourism, trade, crafts, industry and other service providers as well as associations, trade associations and municipal institutions, one of ART's remits is also improving the infrastructure for trade, tourism, services, commerce and transport.

Preparing and organising events and projects, advising organisers, planning and implementing marketing measures, active partnership in cooperative regional development processes to strengthen and support cooperation and regional management processes by assuming responsibility for regional management and the integrated rural development concept in the Altmark are also important elements of ART's work.

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Elbe landscape near Arneburg

The Altmark





Saxony-Anhalt's beautiful north

Key

-  The Romanesque Road
-  Saxony-Anhalt's Garden Dreams
-  Blue Belt

More information about "The Romanesque Road", "Garden Dreams – Historic Parks in Saxony-Anhalt" and the Blue Belt can be found on the following websites:

www.strassederromanik.de
www.gartentraeume-sachsen-anhalt.de
www.blauesband.de

-  Ferries
-  Motorway (course of the planned A14 motorway, already partly under construction)
-  Main road
-  Country road



Auskunft für Bahn und Bus
www.insa.de
 Tel. 0391 5363180

