

Ahrensburg -- Gifted, Bought, Donated But Always Beautiful

Ahrensburg, the central north of Germany, has managed to survive beautifully despite having multiple owners over the years. The tall woods hide ruins of castles dating back to the 1200s, when the town was first founded by the Counts of Schauenburg. The Counts couldn't hang on to the town, however, and it became the property of the Cistercian Reinfeld Abbey.

The Cistercians in Ahrensburg valued hard work and agricultural efforts, so the area was well cultivated. Even now, you can see even fields and eat very well at the local restaurants thanks to a strong farm-to-table culture.

The centuries of caring for the grounds also means that there is great hiking and walking to be had throughout the countryside. Weekender traffic from nearby [Hamburg](#) means if you plan a picnic you need to stake a spot early!

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One place to be sure to walk for a visit or a picnic is the Castle of Ahrensburg. The Cistercians had lost the grounds of the village to the King of Denmark, who gave the town as a gift in 1567 to Daniel Rantzau, a loyal general. Rantzau and his brother had the locals build them a fantastic Renaissance style castle. It took more than 20 years to put up the castle, which included building a moat and waterworks as well as a church.

Yet the new Danish owners weren't bad guys — uniquely for foreign owners, they had the locals build a big almshouse next to the church and cared deeply for the villagers. The town enjoyed great independence and prospered. In return, the people cared deeply for the Castle and grounds, which are still in amazing condition more than 400 years after they were built and open for visits year-round.

Sadly, the Rantzaus weren't very good with money, and had to sell the town in 1759 to Heinrich Carl von Schimmelmann, a rich merchant from [East Germany](#). The locals had to give the whole village and castle a facelift to suit his fancy. The Baroque style you see now on some of the buildings in Ahrensburg reflects this facelift. Schimmelmann eventually donated the town grounds to the people for their own.

The town prospered on its own, but the Castle remains a cornerstone of life in Ahrensburg. Spring and Fall festivals are held in the grounds, and summer concerts mean that whenever you visit there is something to see or do at the beautiful Castle.