

## Aken (Elbe) Is Where Medieval Meets Scary Creatures

Not too far (about 8km to be exact) west of [Dessau-Roßlau](#) in Saxony-Anhalt is the town of Aken (Elbe). The name Elbe in the town's name is quite important, as the town sits along the Biosphere Reserve Middle Elbe. Or, others call it *Biosphärenreservat Mittelelbe*.

The Biosphere Reserve Middle Elbe is why many outdoorsy type folks come to the area. It stretches for about 430 square kilometers, so unless you're really physically fit — hiking, walking, or bicycling the entire thing is a major feat.

But, if you manage to just see a little bit of it, you'll be excited to see over a thousand plant species, more than 200 types of birds, 130 species of bees (I hope you're not allergic), and more than 50 types of dragonflies.

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If you're not a bug person, this might not be an incentive to come to the biosphere. But, the countryside is just so lovely you might very well overlook the fact that there are creepy crawlies. Oh, sorry, I got away from myself there — too many scary movies on the telly! ;-)

Seriously though, the countryside (including the biosphere) is simply idyllic and worth every minute of every day there.

Yet, people can't live by nature alone (oh, yes they can, but you got more stuff to see in Aken)

So, time to see the fantastic St. Nicholas and St. Mary Churches. Both are from the medieval period, so you're sure to see some magnificent stained glass and other artwork.

One house from the Middle Ages is the *Steinerne Kemenate*. OK, this is a bit confusing. It's a "Freihaus" (free house) from the 13th century, that was its own entity. Not officially part of the town, although it was "within the town limits."

The last of the medieval structures within Aken are the Gate Towers, which were part of the town's original defense wall, called a *Stadtmauer*.

After a stop to see Aken's memorial to the town's 9 Jewish citizens and the beautiful fountain on the Marktplatz; go see the historical *Rathaus* (not a Rat House — that's the German name for Town Hall!).

But, after mentioning creepy crawlies, I wouldn't blame you for thinking that for a minute! ;-)