

Altenburg -- Inventor Of The Skat Card Game

The castle at Altenburg was a former royal residence. It sits on top of a crag overlooking the town, staring down at the fountains, church spires and winding streets. You can't help but take a picture.

For more than 1,000 years the town has grown, giving itself a facelift from Gothic to Neo-Gothic to Renaissance to the latest Baroque styles.

The town hall in downtown Altenburg is considered one of the most important Renaissance structures in Germany. It's over 500 years old and open for tours year round. For the Baroque you'll want to hit the *Schenkendorffsches Palais* and the *Alte Amtshaus*. Both were built in the early 1720's and are open to the public year round.

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The Green Oasis and the Skat Fountain, however, you will want to visit in the summer. Winters here are long and cold. All those long hours indoors were not entirely wasted, as Altenburg is known for being the birthplace of the popular Skat card game. A bid, point, and trick card game, it has its own special deck with bells, hearts, leaves and acorns. Naturally, with this special deck came a new industrial group of card makers who flourish to this day.

At the castle in Altenburg, the whole western wing is a card playing exhibit. You can see all the different kinds of decks and some of the many variations on the rules. A souvenir shop is also available where you can get a traditional deck for yourself — they aren't widely available outside of traditional German areas.

Also at the castle you can hear the story of the two princes who were kidnapped in 1455. It seems that their father, Frederick II owed Kunz von Kaufungen damages from the Saxon Fratricidal War.

He was reluctant to pay up, so Kaufungen thought he might be paid faster if Albert and Ernst became the collateral.

The incident, known colloquially as *Prinzenraub*, didn't pan out well. Kaufungen was betrayed, hunted down, and beheaded although both princes were fine.

Other Interesting Facts About Altenburg

The [Leipzig-Altenburg Airport \[AOC\]](#), located just 10 km or 6 mi east of town, is a hub of the Irish low cost carrier, Ryanair, and brings passengers to London/Stansted, Edinburgh, and Barcelona/Girona.