

Essen Parks -- Integrating The Natural World Into Big City Life

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Essen is a city that hasn't lost touch with its natural side. It features nature parks and greenery that are an essential part of city life. Some highlights include the huge Gruga Park, the ever-popular Lake Baldeney and the Nienhausen Park near [Gelsenkirchen](#).

Gruga Park

This Essen park has the distinction of being one of the largest in all of Germany. There is over 700,000 square meters of greenery that is right in the center of the city. Some attractions you'll find within are a tropical plant house, Japanese garden, and a wide variety of flowers.

If you're visiting during the summer, you can take advantage of one of the many open-air festivals that take place in the Gruga Park.

Lake Baldeney

Lake Baldeney was actually created in the 1930s and is still a popular attraction. It's located just to the south of the city and features lots of water-related fun. You can take a boat ride or go out on a paddle boat. You can also get in touch with nature by taking a hike in the surrounding woods, or visit one of the two bird sanctuaries.

Nienhausen Park

Located just on the edge of the city, the Nienhausen Park is another terrific Essen park. You'll find plenty of outdoor recreation, playgrounds and pools. But if you should arrive on a rainy day, you'll see there're also many indoor activities. An indoor pool and sauna will see you through any bad weather days.

Heissiwald Game Preserve

Just to the west of Lake Baldeney, there is a game preserve on the *Ruhrhöhen*. The animals that are protected here include fallow deer, wild boars, red deer and moufflons.

DCC Campingpark Baldeney

Essen offers many opportunities for camping for those outdoorsy types. One of the more popular choices is the DCC Campingpark Baldeney near the Lake. Many of the campsites are open all year round.