

Havelberg -- The Grandest Cathedral On The Romanesque Route

On a chilly autumn day a small crowd stood around the Havelberg Cathedral taking a guided tour of this magnificent Romanesque building in the town of Havelberg.

All I can say is, what a way to start off the day.

The Havelberger Dom is one of the biggest attractions in town, built almost nine hundred years ago in 1170. From the plain front you'd never guess what wonders you'd find on the inside with everything from a tall vaulted ceiling to the minute details that decorate the walls, the pulpit, the altar, and the baptismal font.

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It is one of the most beautiful churches I have seen in years. And that's saying a lot considering Germany has some pretty gorgeous churches all over the country. That's perhaps why the cathedral has put Havelberg on the [Romanesque Route](#), a [scenic route](#) of the country's best Romanesque architecture.

It was hard to tear myself away from the Dom, but the cathedral isn't the only place to see here. There's a *Heimatmuseum* (Local History Museum) housed within the church, which was built on the site of a medieval monastery.

The Prignitz-Museum (as it's called) is more than just exhibits, there are often concerts, tours, and lectures going on in the church complex — and it still retains a real family-friendly atmosphere with special children's tours.

Another religious place is the *Beguinenhaus*, a place where I learned something new. Beguines were women (men were called Begarden) who lived in a religious type community like a monastery, but were “lay people.” That means they didn’t take any kind of religious orders (like monks, priests, and nuns) but lived devotional, celibate lives — and were free to leave to get married or carry on secular lives should they so choose.

What makes the Beguines even more interesting (other than these “religious” communities found all over Europe), they were persecuted by the Church, and they helped with the modern day women’s movement (as women wielded great power in their communities).

Oh, I think I just realized why the Beguines were persecuted...

Inasmuch as Havelberg embraces its past, you’ll love its present. Every year on the first weekend of September there’s a huge *Pferdemarkt* (Horse Market) that brings a hundred-thousand visitors. It’s a huge event that coincides with a flea market and fair.

With that many people around I’m sure the walking paths and cycle trails will be a much quieter venture. Heck, I think a rock concert would be quieter. ;-)