

Oer-Erkenschwick -- With Leonardo DiCaprio's Family

Once known as a coal mining area, Oer-Erkenschwick now bills itself as an idyllic retreat from the hustle and bustle of regular life. The mine has been shut down and now plays out in local life as a Cultural Center and museum.

Other industry hasn't risen up to replace the mine, so the Oer-Erkenschwick town fathers have turned to the natural beauty of the area to suck people in to the town.

Fortunately, while coal mining seems like a pretty ugly industry, Oer-Erkenschwick is actually a beautiful part of Germany. Just over 2 hours from the [Cologne-Bonn Airport](#), the town sits on the edge of the Haard Forest and the Hohe Mark Nature Preserve. It's peaceful. The trails for hiking and running snake in and out of the trees, revealing homes nestled into the forest.

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These scattered homes were actually independent hamlets for centuries. It wasn't until 1953 that Oer-Erkenschwick became an official town, as the little towns were all growing into each other.

Because of its youth and the limited funds of the smaller hamlets in their independent days, you won't see huge cathedrals or castles here. The modest Christ King Church (*Christus-König-Kirche*) is the biggest thing around, followed by some mill houses and mining exhibitions.

However, all the things it lacks are exactly what makes Oer-Erkenschwick a great place to spend the weekend. It's relaxing. It's not about status or being seen. You can just be yourself.

Naturally, Leonardo DiCaprio loved to visit his grandmother here. His mother grew up in Oer-

Erkenschwick, and his grandmother lived there all her life. You can enjoy the same sensations he did — getting off the train and knowing that no one is going to harass you and that you are free to walk off into the forest and just unwind.

DiCaprio had the money to move his family anywhere they wanted to go, but they chose to stay in Oer-Erkenschwick. And really, if it's good enough for movie stars...