

Sontra -- A Network Of Trails Through The Best Of Hesse

Within about a half an hour's drive from [Bad Hersfeld](#) and [Kassel](#) is the 8th century [Hessian](#) town of Sontra and its 15 villages.

For the longest time Sontra was your typical medieval mining town — which was a boost to the economy right up until the 1950's. Today Sontra's mining history is on exhibit at the Mining Museum (called the *Kleines Bergbau-Museum*) in the cellar of the 17th century Town Hall.

Before you get there you might find yourself a bit distracted by Sontra's medieval city center with plenty of timber-framed houses to look at. A fire pretty much leveled the Old Town in 1558, so not much remains prior to that date. Even the *Rathaus* had to be rebuilt.

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Oh, sorry, the Protestant Church of St. Mary's does. It was built at the end of the 15th century in the popular Gothic style of the period, although it did suffer some damage from that 16th century fire. Its organ (which wasn't added to the church until the 18th century) is thought to be one of the best sounding in the whole region.

Some of you might prefer to see the ruins of the Boyneburg, a former palace that still belongs to the von Boyneburg family. It's now a museum, too.

Another historical site in Sontra is its Jewish Cemetery with 150 grave stones. A bit creepy, but still a piece of the town's history.

Sontra's network of hiking and bicycling trails (like the *Barbarossaweg*, *Hessian Radfernweg R5*, and the E6 European Hiking Route) aren't creepy. They're downright idyllic and serene.

Too much walking for me. I'll take a day at the outdoor pool (with waterslide), some miniature golfing, and bowling.

Sontra sounds like a nice place to visit, doesn't it. Well, just hop on either the Bebra-Göttingen rail line, or if you're driving the B27 or B7 federal highway; and you'll probably be here within a half-hour. :-)