

Südheide -- Bonstorf Barrows In The Lüneburg Heath

For those seeking the formerly independent towns of Hermannsburg and/or Unterlüß might be surprised to find out that they both vanished (sort of).

Ok, ok, I'm a shameless exaggerator — but I'm not entirely making this up. You see, as of January 1, 2015, Unterlüß and Hermannsburg have both lost their status and been merged into a new town called Südheide.

But, since there's no Südheide on its own, I'll let you in on both Hermannsburg and Unterlüß individually, one after the other.

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So you found yourself in Hermannsburg asking, who the heck is Hermann? Well, I ain't too sure who Hermann is either, but I do know his town is a pretty happenin' place to be.

Oh, and if it sounds like they're talking funny, it's probably cause they're speaking Low German around these parts.

But, I know deep down you didn't come to Hermannsburg to discuss High or Low German, right? You came to see the Bonstorf Barrows.

The... what? (Oh, I think my eyes glazed over for a second there ;-)

You see, the Bonstorf Barrows are Bronze Age burial mounds (there are six of them) dating from around 1500 B.C. and not found until the 1970's.

That sure was a long (and I mean L-O-N-G) time ago. Um, I mean the burial mounds, not the '70's. ;-)

Speaking of totally smashing finds, wait 'til you hear this. When the 800 year old church (now the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sts. Peter & Paul) burned down, a small 10th century Romanesque bronze crucifix was found; now proudly on display.

There are two more Evangelical Lutheran churches in Hermannsburg, but neither have the history like the former.

Oh, to go back to history, Hermannsburg holds an annual Knights Tournament on the last weekend of May. You've got jousting, archery tournaments, and more than 100 medieval vendors giving you the ultimate in medieval fare.

Sorry, the International Folklore Festival is every three years (in August), But, between them are annual Summer Festivals, Handball Tournaments, concerts, motorcross events, tennis, and lots 'n lots of swimming at either the indoor or outdoor pool.

In-between the festivals and such, take a tour of the Heritage Museum. If you've been here before, come back since they're always changing exhibits. Across the street is the Hermannsburg's Community Center.

On it goes to Südheide's other "district," Unterlüß, which is the hometown of Albert König. Mr. König was a late 19th/early 20th century painter, and a museum is found in what was his former home. It's also the venue for weddings, concerts, and other cultural events.

Mr. König's house, by the way, is an excellent example of north [German architecture](#), if you're into that sort of thing.

So is shopping at Unterlüß's Weekly Market, held on Thursday mornings from 8am to 1pm. Hey, you're bound to get hungry — between all the hiking and horseback riding, you're gonna need to eat, right?

As for the rest of Südheide, it's a fantastic place to be outside — more specifically, the Lüßwald. This is a protected landscape, and it's not unheard of to see everything from deer to wild boars, and grey wolves to black storks. It's got all kinds of tall trees, and used to be a royal hunting ground.

The Lüßwald isn't the only part of Südheide's natural beauty. The new town lies along the [Lüneburg Heath](#) and the Südheide Nature Park. With lots of hiking and cycling trails, a comfy pair of sturdy shoes is a must. Listen closely, I bet even the plants and flowers around here speak Low German, too... ;-)

Between all the mergers, it's good that Südheide has two Tourist Offices — one in Hermannsburg (Am Markt 3) and one in Unterlüß (Albert-König-Straße 10), they're the experts to help you see and do everything around the place. That is, however, if politicians didn't mess them all up once again. ;-)