



Quedlinburg: UNESCO World Heritage

For a rich cultural atmosphere, lots of history and beautiful scenery, go to the Harz mountains.

Do you know where the Harz mountains are? Yes, that's right, they're on the edge of what was formerly East Germany, facing west, and lying south of Hanover, Brunswick and Magdeburg. The highest point is the Brocken at 1141m, which you can still reach by a steam railway built in 1898. At the top there used to stand the most important military listening post for spies from the west, which was operated by the USSR and the GDR and closed off to the public. This came to an end in 1991, and the railway line was re-opened. Now everyone has access to the Brocken with its beautiful panoramic views, and only the museum that's there now reminds you of days gone by.



A mediaeval atmosphere in the centre of Quedlinburg

The Harz region is fascinating from both cultural and historic points of view, and has changed very little over the last 50 years. Pride of place is held by the town of Quedlinburg with a population of around 22,000, which was very much neglected in GDR times. In this mediaeval town, there are something over 1200 half-timbered buildings in an area of just one square kilometre, mostly from the 13th to the 18th century. It's also interesting that

Quedlinburg has never been destroyed by a major fire (unlike so many places). Modern times haven't left much of a mark in the town centre either: as you walk through, you feel as if you've been carried back to the Middle Ages, and the wonderful mediaeval atmosphere is quite an experience. The only thing that really disturbs you are all the parked cars! Small wonder, though, that Quedlinburg was named a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1995.

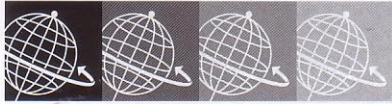
Only a few kilometres west lies the little town of Wernigerode. This marks the beginning of the 140 km network of the Harz narrow-gauge railway line. Even in GDR times, this town was a popular place to visit. Unfortunately Wernigerode has been almost destroyed by fire several times over, and today only part of the town retains its original mediaeval character. Nonetheless, a guided tour round the town is recommended—I was lucky enough to have one given by a charming lady who was a real fount of knowledge. If you do book a tour, be sure to ask your guide to show you the private inner court of Jütters' bookshop, owned by Rainer Schulze: what he's managed to achieve in the middle of the town is an absolute gem. As well as being a bookseller, he's a cabaret performer at the "Herkuleskeule Dresden" and was awarded the German Federal Cross of Merit in 2009: a most interesting character.



Wernigerode, another gem of a town

As well as these beautiful historic towns, the village of Stolberg with a population of 1300 also deserves a mention. You can get there from the station at Berga-Kelbra by bus, or at weekends by train using the Burgenlandbahn. Halberstadt, where the local bishop has his seat,

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Quedlinburg Castle

was unfortunately 80% destroyed in 1945, but is also worth visiting. In short, there are numerous attractions and interesting places to visit in the

Harz mountains. Other examples are the disused mine-works of Büchenberg and Drei Kronen & Ehrte, which are near the small town of Elbingerode. Or the UNESCO World Heritage site of Erzbergwerk Rammelsberg, an ore mine near Goslar.

Useful information

You can get to the Harz region by train, CityNightLine to Hanover or Halle, and then DB and the local HEX (Harz-Elbe-Express) network.

More information on the Harz region can be found at www.harzlife.de (German only). To find a map of the area, click on “Harzkarte” on the left, where you’ll find a direct link to all the points of interest shown. Links to hotels etc are also available.

For hotels, try the Schlossmühle in Quedlinburg (www.schlossmuehle.de),

a converted mill and superb value for money. In Wernigerode, the Travel Charm Hotel, next to the stunning Rathaus, is also splendid (www.travelcharme.com/gotisches-haus.de).

www.quedlinburg.de
www.wernigerode.de



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