

## Bad Blankenburg – spa gardens, kindergarten and the scent of lavender

Bad Blankenburg's most famous export is kindergarten: a word that requires no translation from Japan to America, and an idea that has revolutionised early childhood education. In 1840, the first General German Kindergarten was founded in the Bad Blankenburg Town Hall by Friedrich Fröbel and from here, made its way around the world.

The small city of Bad Blankenburg inspired the reformer. It was here that Fröbel developed his famous educational toys (Fröbel's Gifts), here that his famous songbook "Die Mutter- und Koselieder" flowed from his pen, and here that he trained the first kindergarten teachers. These concepts were preserved to the present day by the Fröbel Garden Museum, and continue to entice teachers from all over the world.

**In addition to Fröbel's great leap of knowledge, this small city on the Schwarza River has maintained a long tradition as a place of healing.**

Visitors to Bad Blankenburg have always been attracted by its good air, clear waters and meandering pathways. In 1911, the

Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt nobility recorded the city as a health resort ("Bad" in German, hence the name Bad Blankenburg). Since 1995, the city has achieved fame for its Antonius mineral spring, which promises relief from stomach pains, circulation problems and deficiency in calcium.

Bad Blankenburg may be the smallest, and with its 750-year old history, the youngest of the trinity of Dreiklang cities, but it is also the most regal of the three. In former times, Castle Greifenstein, which stands high over the city, was known as Castle Blankenburg and was the seat of a branch line of the Schwarzburg dynasty. It was here that Günther XXI was born into a divided and quarrelling world. This confusion resulted in his crowning as the German King in 1349, a move that established him as a direct adversary to the Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV, a fate he survived by only a few months.

Castle Greifenstein, by then abandoned by the nobility, was rescued from decline by the German Romanticism movement and the commitment of its citizens. In 1900, a falconry and sporting association were established

in the castle – with on-going effects for the present day.

The Bad Blankenburg Civic Centre has developed into a cultural venue for the whole area, and international sporting teams regularly visit the Regional Sports School for training camps and competitions. Guests from around the world also converge on the city every August for the annual Evangelical Christian Alliance Conference.

The city even has a queen: a lavender queen. Flowering lavender bushes of all varieties turn Bad Blankenburg into a Thuringian Provence, a beautiful sight that is celebrated every summer with the annual Lavender Festival. A highlight is a dip in the "Lavendelbad" – a tub filled with lavender water. The future of this spa town has awakened the interest of students from Erfurt, who have recently designed a three-dimensional, futuristic tour of the Greifenstein city.



- | 1 Greifenstein Falcon
- | 2 Flowering lavender

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