

Discover nature on an industrial scale

♥ Architecture, history, surprise
🕒 October

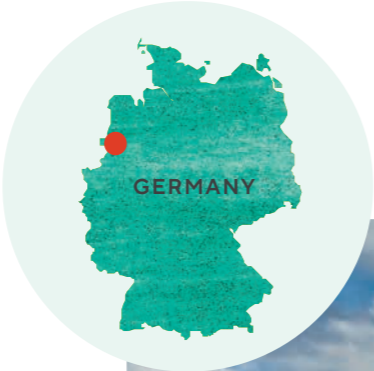
Steel magnate August Thyssen was a visionary, but even he could hardly have imagined that the iron works in northern Duisburg he opened in 1902 would be rebooted as a beloved post-industrial park and playground a century later. The belching plant in western Germany's Ruhr region – once the backbone of the country's coal and steel industry – soldiered on until the 1970s' global steel crisis ushered in its demise. On 4 April 1985 workers wiped their sweaty brows for the last time at the end of the final shift. But it wasn't the end of the plant.

It took another visionary, German landscape architect Peter Latz, to turn the silenced blast furnaces, ore bunkers and casting houses into a

shining beacon of the 250-mile (400km) Industrial Heritage Trail that connects over 50 sites that shaped the region's history for 150 years. Instead of letting the plant devolve into a wasteland, Latz dreamed up the Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord, a clunky name for a complex that's a captivating combination of history, culture and nature.

Tribute to the past

Of course, the concept of turning industrial relics into recreational spaces is hardly unique. But the Landschaftspark is different in that it embraces the site's gritty pedigree instead of erasing it, leaving its DNA intact and recasting its hulking structures in new roles. Head up the defunct blast furnace for giddy views of the park and the Ruhr. Cycle along railroad tracks once used to



Right: Plants of the post-war period adorn the industrial heritage of Landschaftspark

Below: Blast furnaces now provide views not fumes; relics are reborn



Q&A

Nature and industry, isn't that a contradiction?

Not at all. Although the industrial building is the park's focal point, nature has reclaimed its place. In fact, because of the extremely diverse terrain and soils, unusual plants have developed that are only found in these types of post-industrial spaces.

Any animals?

Lots! Bats, natterjack toads, around 100 species of beetles and more than 60 species of birds live here, especially in the 'Wildnis' (wilderness) area, which was able to develop undisturbed into one of the park's richest biotopes after the steelworks closed.

Secret tip?

The views of blazing red vines on an autumn stroll along the elevated walkway above Sinter Park.

Frank Jebavy, Park Director



Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord

transport coal and iron. Watch daredevils rappel down Monte Thyssen, the ‘peak’ of a storage bunker turned climbing garden. You can scuba dive amid artificial reefs and sunken wrecks in the cylindrical gas tank and catch a concert under the stars.

Nature in unexpected places

As for the gardens, don’t come here looking for manicured lawns and formal flower beds. The natural joys of the Landschaftspark are a bit more 2.0. Little by little, nature is reclaiming the terrain. Around 450 flowering plant species now flourish here, including rare and exotic ones that arrived as stowaways on ships ferrying in iron ore and other raw materials from Africa and the Americas. Purple spurgeflowers push through crevices in concrete walls. White-blossom hawthorns flank bicycle paths. Water lilies thrive in cooling tanks. Bees buzz around acacia blanketing slag

Opposite:
Evening
light show at
Weltkulturerbe
Völklinger Hütte

Right: An
industrial
wasteland has
been recycled
into an adventure
playground

heaps. And rows of poplars line a canal. In the old ore bunkers, you can sniff pink roses and magenta-hued buddleias, picnic under birch trees, chase butterflies or play hide-and-seek among the hedges.

The Landschaftspark may challenge, perhaps even redefine, our perception of natural beauty. But when the sky darkens and the light installation by British artist Jonathan Park bathes the buildings and trees in a sci-fi-esque chorus of colour, it’s easy to feel the romance and healing magic of nature here.

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Don’t Miss

- ➔ Climbing to the top of the blast furnace viewing platform
- ➔ Smelling flowers growing wild in storage bunkers
- ➔ Basking in the glow of a massive light installation

Find Your Joy

Getting there

From Duisburg’s main train station, tram 903 travels directly to the ‘Landschaftspark-Nord’ stop. The park entrance

is about a 10-minute signposted walk away.

Accessibility

The park is largely wheelchair accessible, though paths are often uneven, and assistance may be needed in some areas. Guide dogs are allowed everywhere. There are five accessible toilets on the site.

When to go

April and May are when flora and fauna wake up after the long winter: lizards scurry along railway tracks, dragonflies hatch on the canal banks, and anemones, cherries and lilies blossom. In July and August you can catch concerts or a festival and watch ducks frolic, while autumn (September/October) sees the vines

erupt in a blaze of carmine.

Further information

- Free admission.
- Open year-round.
- Dogs welcome on a lead, except in event spaces.
- Restaurant with beer garden in the former switching house.
- www.landschaftspark.de

Other German Symbols of Renewal

Maximilianpark

A giant glass elephant welcomes you to Maximilian Park in Hamm. Climb its trunk for splendid views over the entire park, created on the site of an abandoned colliery in 1984. Embarking on an aimless wander takes you through themed gardens filled with herbs and roses, or a sea of perennial flower beds designed by Dutch garden architect Piet Oudolf.

Don’t miss

Marvelling at butterflies in their tropical enclosure

Weltkulturerbe Völklinger Hütte

As many as 17,000 workers toiled in hellish heat and smoke at the peak of production in the hulking Völklinger Hütte ironworks in the Saar region. Since closing in 1986, it has gone from hell to heaven, with flowers, trees and mosses reclaiming vast parts of the huge complex. It was declared a Unesco World Heritage Site in 1994.

Don’t miss

Heading up the 150ft-high (45m) former blast furnace for bird’s-eye views



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