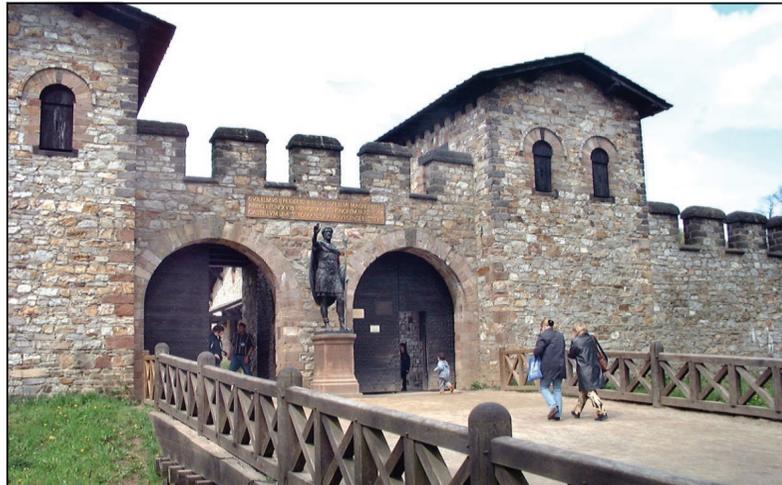


The Hessenpark, a huge open-air showcase of structures from all over Hessen, regularly features special exhibits, crafts demonstrations, markets and festivals. Photo below: Visitors pass under the watchful gaze of Emperor Antoninus Pius to enter the reconstructed Saalburg fortress.



Taunus adventures

Explore history, walk in the footsteps of the Romans or enjoy a laid back day at an unusual amusement park

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Scores of hiking trails, Roman remnants, an open-air park packed with several-hundred-year-old Hessian structures and a unique amusement park await visitors in the Taunus Mountains just north of Frankfurt. Whether it's Roman history, a look at how the inhabitants of local villages lived in past centuries or simply an enjoyable day spent playing and picnicking, the area around Wehrheim and Neu-Anspach features a wide variety of opportunities.

Freizeitpark Lochmühle

While the Lochmühle may not be the biggest amusement park around with the latest breathtaking rides, it will definitely appeal to the younger set. Many of the rides are self-operated — pedal power heli-

copters, bikes with oddly shaped wheels, a huge carpet slide and rafts that must be poled through a stream, among others. As children spend their time exploring the various amusements throughout the park, which is set in the forest just down the hill from the Saalburg Roman Fortress, parents can stake a picnic or grill area to set up lunch.

In addition to the many amusements, which also include a small roller coaster, train, mini golf and trampolines, young and old are invited into several petting zoo enclosures where they can feed sheep, goats, donkeys and chickens.

The Lochmühle is open daily from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Admission is free for visitors under 90 centimeters, €8 for youngsters up to 120 centimeters (and over 65 years old) and €9.50 for taller folks. A group



A stone marker from a village in Hessen is one of many on display at Hessenpark.

rate €7.50 is available for individuals in groups of 20 or more people. Adults who visit on either the first or third Friday of the month also only pay €8.

Roman history

In the woods above the Lochmühle and for hundreds of miles in either direction one can find traces of the Roman Empire which

once ruled large portions of Europe and beyond. The Saalburg, a reconstructed Roman fortress, once served as home for Roman legionnaires who helped guard the Limes — the lengthy northern border of the empire which snaked through the German countryside.

Pass over the drawbridge under the watchful gaze of Emperor Antoninus Pius to enter the fortress. Inside visitors can wander through a museum packed with showcases full of Roman artifacts (clothing, weapons, pottery, coins, etc.) unearthed in the nearby countryside. Visitors can also get an idea of what life was like for the Roman soldiers, how they bathed, enjoyed central heating — hot water and steam piped under their stone floors — socialized, trained and were rewarded with tracts of land for their service to the empire.

The fortress, which was rebuilt over a hundred years ago, grew from a simple encampment with some 100 men around A.D. 83 to an extensive fortification with high stone walls in A.D. 200. Thousands of craftspeople, veterans, families and traders were thought to have lived in the fort and a nearby village before the Romans eventually abandoned the Limes to the local Ger-

man tribes in the middle of the second century.

The Saalburg is open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. during the warmer months of the year. Entrance costs €2.50 for adults, €1.50 for children age 6-18 and it is free for those under 6 years of age.

Following trail markers and signs one will discover remnants of the Limes — dirt fortifications and stone monuments. Outside of the Saalburg one can also wander through the excavated stone foundations of several buildings, bathhouses, a well and nearby burial grounds.

The Saalburg parking lot is also a good place from which to launch a biking or hiking trip. Trail markers and route maps indicate paths that lead higher up to the Herzberg tower and restaurant, the Sandplacken restaurants and on up to the Feldberg, the highest point in the Taunus.

One can also hike to the nearby Hessenpark, a huge open-air showcase depicting life in Hessen over the past four centuries.

Hessenpark

Today most Americans and Europeans take everyday conveniences such as refrigeration, indoor plumbing and electric stoves for granted. But a mere two centuries ago, most inhabitants of villages throughout the Hessen

countryside were unaware of these efforts to ease their daily lives.

Visitors to the Hessenpark can explore a variety of dwellings, houses of worship, mills and more from the past 400 years. The buildings, removed from their original sites in villages all over Hessen, have been meticulously restored and refurbished to give modern-day visitors an idea of what rural life was like before, during and after the industrial revolution.

Demonstrations of handicrafts

Demonstrations of age-old crafts ranging from cloth dying to barrel making, food preparation to pottery making, stone masonry to wicker work are featured on a regular basis. Located outside the entrance to the open-air museum is also a market square where farmers markets are held regularly. Surrounding the market square are several stores and a restaurant selling traditional foods from all over Hessen.

Half-timbered houses make up a large number of the dwellings featured. Many of these century-old farmhouses, churches, mills and schools were left behind when German settlers emigrated to the United States and other lands to seek their fortunes.

While these new immigrants brought their craftsmanship, agricul-

tural knowhow, religious beliefs and guilds to America, the fortunes of those who stayed behind were dramatically affected by the changing nature of society and several major wars. Buildings fell into disuse, were damaged through neglect and acts of violence or were simply abandoned in areas where they were no longer needed for daily life.

The large, open-air museum, founded in 1974, attempts to recreate the various facets of village life through the eras. Bleating goats, the smell of village life including piles of manure and the stone-cold interiors of the dwellings offer a fair representation.

Visitors can see first-hand how common tasks such as cooking and food storage changed over the years. From food preparation over an open fireplace before the mid-19th century to the evolution of the wood-burning stove, the saving of dried fruit and pickled or smoked meat to preservation in jars after 1899, there is no doubt life changed dramatically.

While the refrigerator was in use by the end of the 19th century, it was considered a luxury in most rural communities until after World War II, according to the museum guide.

Villagers were expected to bake their own bread and produce their own clothing. Communal bake houses were not uncommon in villages and many households featured looms for textile production.

Houses of worship

While strolling through the various "regions" of the Hessenpark one comes across grazing sheep, duck ponds, a church cemetery, windmills, houses of worship and historical boundary markers. The boundary stones, gathered from each of Hessen's regions, feature coats of arms and other markings. The oldest, which has a star of the county of Ziegenhain, dates back to 1450.

Germany's turbulent past is also recalled in the reconstructed synagogue from Nentershausen. The wood-framed structure dating back to 1785 was partially destroyed during the pogrom night of 1938. It was removed in 1985 and restored in 1996 at Hessenpark.

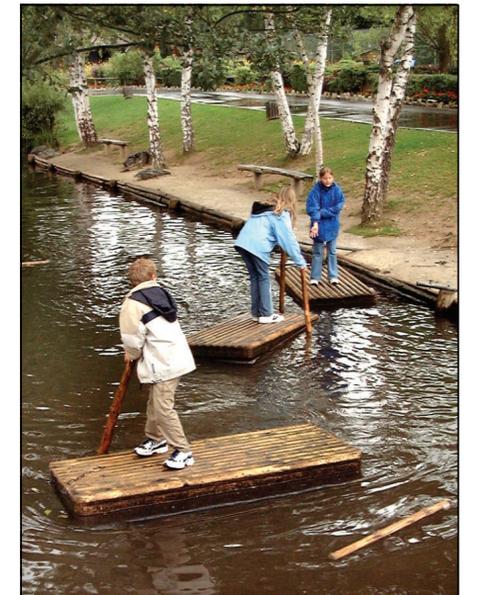
Hessenpark features several special crafts demonstrations June 27 including beekeeping, a broom maker, cane carver and tobacco pipe maker in addition to regularly scheduled demonstrations whenever the park is open.



Half-timbered buildings housing Hessen craft shops, food stores and a restaurant featuring traditional Hessen cuisine are situated around the market square at the Hessenpark.



Youngsters get up close and personal with some of the furry inhabitants of the Hessenpark.



Youngsters make like Tom Sawyer and go rafting at the Freizeitpark Lochmühle.



Visitors to the Saalburg examine tools and other items used by the Romans some 2,000 years ago and unearthed in the countryside along the Limes, the northern Roman border.

The park is open March 1 through Oct. 31 from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Admission is €4 for adults, €2.50 for children age 6 and older, and free for those under 6. A family ticket is available for €10.

For more information on the Hessenpark visit www.hessenpark.de, the Lochmühle visit www.lochmuehle.de or the Saalburg browse to www.saalburg-kastell.de on the Internet.