

Information about the park for our English-speaking visitors

The Stone Age Park Dithmarschen in Albersdorf

The Concept

The Stone Age Park Dithmarschen in Albersdorf is a landscape-integrated archaeological open-air museum. It has been designed and developed since 1997 covering an area of over 40 hectares. The landscape contains nine original archaeological sites and is modelled on an image of Neolithic cultural landscapes. The Stone Age Park Dithmarschen includes a Stone Age village with reconstructed buildings from different periods and the Museum of Archaeology and Ecology of Dithmarschen which displays original artefacts discovered in local excavations. One of the main aims of the The Stone Age Park Dithmarschen is to make archaeological research and its discoveries accessible to the general public by providing a unique learning and educational site for visitors of all ages. At the same time, however, the impact of population growth on the relationship between ecosystems and landscape development is an important consideration for the protection of natural environments and cultural monuments.

The combination of theory and practice, as well as the potential for awareness raising and emotional involvement offered by the integrated approach of interpretation ensures that the knowledge gained about the past aids the understanding of the present and – as a result – helps the visitor to develop an interest in a deep-reaching engagement with the reconstructed landscape, monuments and buildings.

The Stone Age Park Dithmarschen is a certified educational institute, promoting sustainable ecological, cultural and financial development of the Albersdorf region. In 2012, an experience-oriented educational concept was developed for the expansion of the outdoor park area. The project was developed with the support of a scientific committee, the regional government Schleswig-Holstein (from the EU-funded program "Zukunftsprogramm Wirtschaft"), the metropolitan region of Hamburg (Foerderfonds Nord), and the "Bingo environment Lottery".

Reconstruction Projects

Two new Stone Age houses, built according to original dimensions based on excavation discoveries in Schleswig-Holstein, were erected in cooperation with the Archaeological State Office of Schleswig-Holstein. The projects included a ritual area, dedicated to "sacrifices", with a boardwalk, and a wooden platform next to a newly created pond compound. The park also features an erosion simulation area where likely scenarios of fertile soil loss during the Neolithic and mediaeval periods are demonstrated.

Recent additions to the park include info pavilions in the forest, an audio guide system for the entire park grounds, the reconstructions of various large stone grave formations, and a reconstructed Bronze Age burial mound. A Mesolithic dwelling of the "last hunter-gatherers" of Northern Germany from around 5000 BC was reconstructed in 2014. A path guides visitors from the entrance of the park through the various time periods. Winding past reconstructed buildings, artefacts and landscapes, it brings Stone Age cultures to life.

Research Projects

Alongside these building projects, which are part of a larger framework of knowledge and content development as well as serving as a tourist attraction, the park regularly supports and hosts geological and archaeological research projects. The projects include research into the ancient countryside, conducted by the Institute of Ecosystem Research of the University of Kiel, pollen analysis, and excavations of megalithic graves in the region and of a causewayed enclosure from the Funnel Beaker period at the Dieksknöll near Albersdorf. The latter is done in cooperation with the Institute for Pre-and Protohistory of the University of Kiel and is part of the multilayer project called "Early monumentality and social differentiation".

The research done in the valley of the Gieselau, which is located to the south of Albersdorf, revealed important new discoveries. In one of the studied areas, an early (late Mesolithic) phase of soil erosion was recorded which occurred around 4700 BC. These findings have now been verified by multiple C14 data analysis. A possible connection to the first establishment of agriculture is being discussed.

Another site, dated to the mid-Neolithic period in the 4th millennium BC, revealed the possible discovery of an area of "shifting-cultivation", showing a rather remarkable small-scale variability in cultivation methods and intensity. The data gathered will inform the landscape development of the Stone Age Park as it would have been used in the mid-Neolithic period. Furthermore, the areas of the park are available regularly for experimental archaeology research. Examples include the project on "daily life experiments" conducted in cooperation with the Institute of Archaeology of Hamburg University, and the slash-and-burn trials in the forest area.

Future Developments

The construction of an exhibition and educational center at the entrance area of the park is being planned as a mid-term goal. This so-called "Stone Age House" will eventually replace the current permanent exhibition which is located 2 km away from the entrance area of the park and housed in rented museum rooms.

Planning a Visit

The Stone Age Park is accessible throughout the year free of charge (with parking fee). The Stone Age village is open from the end of March until the end of October, from Tuesday to Sunday, 11 am to 5 pm (entrance fee).

On Sundays and public holidays as well as during school breaks the park offers plenty of hands-on activities and presentations.

For further information, please visit www.steinzeitpark-dithmarschen.de

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