

Welcome to the “guardian of time”

Cuxhaven has come a long way – from a small settlement on the Elbe estuary to the largest health resort on the North Sea coast. The coastal landscape, which incorporates moors, the flat marshland and the “Hohe Lieth” geest ridge, attracts visitors with its varied habitats.

Beaches, mudflats and the sea are the most popular attractions for visitors. Cuxhaven’s multifaceted urban life is complemented by cultural events and the town’s maritime flair.

But how did the Cuxhaven that we know today, evolve from this once deserted region? When was the first settlement here, how was the overseas port developed and which course did the town’s history take?

Immerse yourself in the history of Cuxhaven!

Cuxhaven in the course of time

The old guard room was built around 1720 and was part of the group of buildings belonging to Ritzebüttel Castle. The castle can be seen as the nucleus for other historical developments in Cuxhaven. The so-called "Amt Ritzebüttel", similar to an annex, was under Hamburg's rule. The Hanseatic city established the 10th Battalion of the Citizens Militia in the early 19th century in order to maintain protection and order. Men from the local population were obligated to join and carry out guard duty or take part in fire protection, etc.

The development lasted for many millennia. But how did the habitat in this region come into being? How long has the coastline existed as it is today? Who were the first settlers and how have humans managed to defy the tides since then? The history of Cuxhaven comes alive here – listen to how eventful it has been.

Town – land – low tide – high tide

The first settlements in the region eventually formed the town of Cuxhaven. Humans changed the existing natural landscape to form the cultivated landscape as it is today. Life on the coast was increasingly influenced by the construction of dykes, fishing, the military base and tourism. Therefore, the history of the town and the surrounding region is a collection of short stories and pictures. Each aspect reveals further enthralling details. Together, they create a picture of Cuxhaven, which is complemented by many more pieces of the mosaic in the form of information and life stories. The people behind the stories with their fate and the effects they have, are always particularly interesting.

Urn, bronze aged pottery vessel, 3rd-5th century

Excavated 1976

Finds from archaeological excavations expand our knowledge of past human ways of life. Over 500 graves from the 2nd-5th century have been found in the Gudendorf-Kösterweg cemetery.

Pots made of Saxon embossed pottery have been found frequently in the Elbe-Weser region. The elaborately decorated pottery establishes a connection to England, since strong similarities in its composition enable us to deduce that emigrants from this region settled in England and maintained burial traditions there.

The Hamburg Citizen Militia

In 1815, the 10th Battalion of the Citizens Militia was established in the Hamburg so-called "Amt Ritzebüttel" in order to maintain protection and order. The main guard room was occupied by a sergeant, a drum major and six guardsmen. The battalion was disbanded in 1868.

The uniform on the right belonged to an infantry drum major (with a white bandelier holding two drumsticks). The uniform on the left belonged to an artillery sapper (with a belt holding a cartridge pouch).

Film of Cuxhaven

Welcome! Accompany us on a journey to the beginnings of the Cuxhaven settlement. Sea levels have been rising worldwide since the last Little Ice Age. 6000 years ago when the first hunters and gatherers advanced sporadically to the North Sea coasts, the shoreline is shifted up to the elevated geest ridges.

At the beginning of the Bronze Age, the first farmers settle in the region permanently. Archaeological findings from this era are evidence of this. They build byre dwellings, they cultivate the land and keep livestock. Towards the end of the Bronze Age, the sea level begins to fall. Large areas of land form east of the geest ridge. The wet meadows are not yet suitable for settlement and are flooded again in 600 BC.

Shortly before the birth of Christ, the sea level falls again, quickly. The areas of land dry out and the first settlers move onto the marshland. They build their houses on mounds, so-called "terps", for protection against high tide water levels and storm tides.

The process of cultivating the land in the new marshland, hectare by hectare, is laborious.

The 12th century settlers build countless canals, ditches and dykes. They manage to protect a large part of the fertile land from flooding.

Between 1332 and 1340 Ritzebüttel Castle is built by knights from Lappe. The original fortification becomes the centre of the principality and forms the nucleus of the settlement that today is Cuxhaven. Hardly 50 years later, troops from Hamburg besiege and storm the strategically important position on the Elbe. The Ritzebüttel administration loses its independency to the Hanseatic city for the next 600 years.

At the beginning of the 17th century, dykes that are kilometres long, are built behind the shoreline. New land is to be reclaimed from the sea – thus a new area becomes available from Döse up to the Altenbrucher Tief. However, the newly built dam constructions cannot withstand the water from the Elbe and had to be reset many times in the following decades.

Man is powerless against the sheer force of nature. In the so-called "Christmas Flood" of 1717, the land is flooded up to the geest ridge. The dykes soon break, the flood surprises inhabitants while they sleep. Villages are 4 metres under water, the fields become unfertile due to the salinity. A whole region suffers from hunger and poverty for a long time.

Laboriously, more permanent coastal protection constructions are built towards the end of the 18th century. Existing dykes are built up higher and new stone embankments are built in the dyke foreland. The areas around Ritzebüttel and the harbour settlement "By dem Diecke Kuckshaven" become part of the Cuxhaven rural community in 1872.

The industrialisation at the end of the 19th century brings an upturn and the population grows. The railway line to Harburg is opened with a ceremony and the sea fish market is set up. In 1905, Döse is incorporated and two years later, on March 15th, 1907, Cuxhaven is awarded town status.

Amtmann Abendroth founded the first public baths with a warm bath in 1816 on the Alten Liebe, a so-called "Karrenbad" in Döse and a so-called "Bassinbad" at the Alten Hafen. At first, only a few aristocrats use them, since swimming in the sea is not popular. However, over the years, a wide range of healing treatments is developed. The sea and the beach attract more and more bathers. It develops into a permanent industry for the town.

Bathing tourism ends abruptly when Cuxhaven is blocked off at the beginning of the First World War. The consequences of war and inflation negatively affect the region. In the late 20s and 30s the town recovers and experiences an upturn with plenty of flats being built, expansion of the fish market and immigration. Although the cityscape was spared destruction during the First World War, serious damage is visible after bombings towards the end of the Second World War. Cuxhaven is occupied by British troops.

Numerous war refugees and displaced persons come to the town. Temporary housing has to be set up for them. Shipping, industry and bathing tourism recover in the post-war years, flourish in the 60s to their former strength – and soon even beyond. Due to incorporation between 1970 and 1972 Cuxhaven experiences the height of its population.

Today, Cuxhaven is the largest German North Sea health resort and has up to 4 million overnight stays annually. With fresh ideas, fine maritime cuisine and new economic directions, Cuxhaven is always accompanied by tradition and the knowledge that it has created the natural landscape behind the dykes itself.

Discover the many sights of the region and make up your own mind! Cuxhaven looks forward to your visit!

1. The tides

The changing tides

With the North Sea and the Elbe, the seaside town of Cuxhaven is surrounded by water on two sides.

The changing tides have always influenced this place. Since being declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2009, recognition of the significance of the Lower Saxony Wadden Sea has crossed national borders. The people have gained an awareness of the uniqueness and diversity of its flora and fauna. More than 10 million migratory birds roost here every year.

This area is only made habitable due to the protection that the dykes and other bank reinforcements provide. Yet still, the storm tides have managed to sweep over the crests of the dykes on numerous occasions or the dykes have burst. The water level markings remind us of the storm tides that the people have experienced here.

Beginning of dyke construction

The Hadelner Seebandsdeich (also called : Hadelner Seebandsdeich) was a dyke at the end of the southern Elbe banks between Cuxhaven and Belum. The rampart saved the county of Hadeln from impending storm tides and flooding for around 800 years, with only a few exceptions. Since the beginning of its construction in the 12th century, the dyke was continually extended and adjusted to cope with the water levels of the storm tides that were getting higher and higher.

Christmas Flood of 1717

In his paper "The Christmas Flood of 1717 between the lower Weser and the lower Elbe" local historian, Benno Eide Siebs (1891–1977) describes the impacts of the flood on the basis of an eyewitness account: "At 4 o' clock in the morning, the water ripped some rods of the dyke away. The new dyke near Groden (...) was lost completely, the old one burst in five places. (...) Altogether 127 smaller and larger buildings drifted away in this county, 20 collapsed."

Severe storm tides of the present day

Contemporary witnesses can still remember several severe storm tides in the 1960s and 1970s to this day. Luckily, the highest storm tide in the Elbe so far, on the 3rd January 1976, did not cause any flooding or damage to sluices in Cuxhaven. The implemented measures of the General Coastal Protection Plan from 1973 ensured, at a great financial expense, that dykes were raised.

New port

When overseas passenger traffic to New York is relocated from the Port of Hamburg to Cuxhaven in 1889, the port has to be expanded. From 1892 – 1897 the new port is built and from 1900 – 1902 it is complemented by a new terminal building (today's Hapag Halls). Since the ships are getting bigger and bigger, the port facilities have to be extended several times. From 1911 – 1913, the Steubenhöft pier is erected and at 400 m in length is the largest in the world at the time. The First World War stops this significant economic development.

Naval base

In 1892, the Reichstag approves the establishment of a garrison in Cuxhaven. In 1893, the 1st company of the navy artillery division moves in. The navy is an important economic factor for the town. Many of the buildings that are built for the military can

later be used for civilian purposes: The Grimmershörn military swimming baths becomes the ferry terminal and the navy hospital becomes the town hospital. In 1969, the naval base is relocated from Cuxhaven to Wilhelmshaven.

Fishing

Fishing has always been a tradition in Cuxhaven. In 1891, catching and processing fish experiences a strong upturn; in 1899, a small auction hall is built. In 1907, a private deep-sea fishing company is established and in 1908 the sea fish market is set up in Cuxhaven. In the 1920s and 1930s, the fish market expands, the fish processing industry grows and with it the town itself. The Windstärke 10 museum provides information on the history of fishing.

Seebad Aktiengesellschaft Cuxhaven

In 1816, lawyer Amandus Augustus Abendroth (1767–1842) establishes the Seebad Aktiengesellschaft Cuxhaven (Seaside Resort PLC). The alderman of the Hamburg annex of Ritzebüttel wants to boost the local economy following the end of French occupation. The town's favourable location as a seaside resort between the Weser and the Elbe was already described in 1793 by Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742–1799), the physicist and natural scientist from Göttingen. He had visited English seaside resorts and asks in a publication in 1792: "Why does Germany not yet have a large public seaside resort?"

Spas, pools and Badekarren

The first visitors to the Cuxhaven seaside resort in 1816 were able to take "Dreyerley baths" on their visit: Inside the public baths there are tubs, outside there are pools covered with canvas and, of course, bathing in the sea from so-called "Badekarren" (bathing carts). Coachmen steer the four-wheeled carts that are pulled by two horses into the shallow water. The guests enter the sea via some steps. Spa doctors are responsible for the therapies and prescribe sulphur, drip, hot and cold baths, depending on the illness.

UNESCO World Heritage Site Wadden Sea

The Wadden Sea is a unique landscape between land and sea. This includes the wide mudflats, firm, drying up sands, large tidal channels, small tidal creeks, shell banks, dense seagrass meadows and soft silty mudflats. This ever-changing diverse landscape has developed under the influence of the tides. The Wadden Sea is a habitat for more than 10,000 flora and fauna, and migratory birds depend upon it as a stopover and an area to rest. In 2009, the Wadden Sea was declared a heritage site and is now listed in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Largest German North Sea health resort

In 2019, Cuxhaven is Germany's largest North Sea health resort with around four million overnight guests. The bathers are now called "holidaymakers"; they take part in guided mudflat hikes, play beach volleyball and eat fish in bread rolls. Medicinal baths with sea water are still available as they were 200 years ago. Wellbeing plays a central role and is now called wellness.

Amandus Augustus Abendroth

*16th October 1767

† 17th December 1842

Doctor of Law, alderman in Ritzebüttel, founder of the seaside resort in 1816

Albert Herrmann

*15th November 1844

† 27th February 1933

Trained book printer, town crier on the beach to large audiences

Reinhard Woltmann

*28th December 1757

† 20th April 1837

Hydraulic engineer, sub-surveyor for the Department for Coastal Protection in Ritzebüttel, responsible for important dyke reinforcements

“Alte Liebe” (Old Love) with poem (post card, post stamp 10.08.1897)

Old dyke line near Cuxhaven in 1618

Celebration of the opening of the fish market in 1908

2. Town and country

Cuxhaven – a special location

Cuxhaven lies on the Elbe estuary in the northernmost point of Lower Saxony. The port provides a link to worldwide maritime transport and has a direct connection to the largest German port: Hamburg. In earlier centuries, Cuxhaven identified and secured the entrance to the Elbe for shipping traffic, provided a port of refuge and a winter harbour and, later, also a jetty for overseas passenger traffic.

With the establishment of the seaside resort in the 19th century, the flow of visitors also increased, tourist steamers dock and bring wealthy travellers with them. To this day, the special location by the sea with a view of the Wadden Sea continues to attract many regular visitors and a high number of overnight guests.

Knights and Hanseatics

The knights from Lappe own the “Hohe Lieth” property on the geest ridge and rule over the surrounding marshland up to the Elbe. Around 1340, they build a fortified castle, which becomes the nucleus of a settlement. To guarantee the safety of merchant shipping on the Elbe estuary, the Hamburgers force the knights to forfeit their dominion. In 1394, the City of Hamburg acquires what is known today as “Ritzebüttel Castle”, with the villages that belonged to it, and founded the so-called “Amt Ritzebüttel” (Annex of Ritzebüttel).

The district of Cuxhaven

The Hamburg Rural Community Ordinance’s decree from 1871 means that the parishes now elect local councils. Döse and Ritzebüttel/Cuxhaven are merged into one parish in 1905 and in 1907, the town of Cuxhaven comes into being. The parishes of Duhnen and Neuwerk are incorporated into it in 1935, among others and between 1970 and 1972 the parishes of Sahlenburg and Altenwalde, among others. In 1977, Cuxhaven loses its status as a district and becomes a “large, independent town” with just under 60,000 inhabitants.

Alte Liebe?

The “Alte Liebe” (Old Love) observation platform is situated on the upstream boundary of the Cuxhaven port to the Lower Elbe fairway. Since the Elbe expands increasingly at the beginning of the 18th century, the first plans for necessary measures to reinforce the land are made in 1729. The idea is to sink three old ships in 1733 that are filled with rocks to form a basis for this. One of the sunken ships is called “Die Liebe” (Love) and is the namesake.

Kugelbake

The Kugelbake navigational aid is situated where the Elbe ends and the North Sea begins from a geographical point of view. It serves as an orientation point for shipping. The first structure was supposedly erected in 1703. The story of its destruction, reconstruction, security and renovation is quite eventful. Navigational aids were broken at the beginning of the First World War to impede Germany's enemies' orientation. It gained its current shape in 1866/67. The Kugelbake has been used as a motif on the town's coat of arms since 1912.

Geest

"Geest" is the name for a type of landscape in Northern Germany and is characterised by sand deposits. Since this land is higher up, the geest is often known as a geest ridge or sand ridge. The "Hohe Lieth" geest ridge in Cuxhaven is formed around 100,000 years ago.

Linguistically, the word is derived from the Low German adjectives "gest" (dry, barren) and "güst" (infertile with regard to milk-producing animals). The soil is not very suitable for agriculture.

Marsh

"Marsh" – also known as tidal wetlands – is the name for a type of landscape in the area around the North-West German coasts and rivers, which formed after the Ice Age. Marshes are flat areas of land without natural elevations. They are formed from sediment deposits, are situated at about the height of sea level inland of the mudflats and reach as far as the geest. The word originates from the Proto-Germanic "mariska" (belonging to the sea, water landscape, pasture). The soil is fertile but needs to be drained.

First traces of humans

Archaeological finds indicate that the first humans came through the area around Cuxhaven around 12,000 years ago. Stone tools were found by hunters near Pennworthmoor in Cuxhaven-Sahlenburg. At that time, there were two lakes where the moor is now, around which hunters of the Late Ice Age camped and made knives, blades, burins and drills. Palaeolithic hunters followed the seasonally migrating wild animals.

The quarantine system

One of the important jobs that Cuxhaven takes over from approx. 1720 onwards is checking ships for epidemics. The quarantine patrol ship "Johannes" is anchored on the Elbe from 1770 onwards and sets out a shallow with a doctor and an armed crew to check ships arriving from overseas. Epidemics such as Asian cholera, typhus, yellow fever, the plague, smallpox and rat plague were feared most. From 1883 onwards, entire ship crews are isolated in the Groden quarantine facility.

Duhnen artist colony

From 1895 onwards, annual meetings of students from the Grand Ducal Baden Academy in Karlsruhe take place in Duhnen under the direction of Professor Carlos Grethe. They paint the North German heath and coastal landscape during the summer months. The director of the academy, Gustav Schönleber, had discovered the qualities of this place for study. Several artists follow his example. In addition to the dunes and rural motifs, they also discover the beauty of the mudflats and capture them artistically.

Dictatorship and persecution

With the appointment of Adolf Hitler as Chancellor on 30th January 1933 and Germany's subsequent path to dictatorship, many things changed in Cuxhaven. Even though Cuxhaven was not a Nazi stronghold, a photo from here that makes it clear that the hatred and racial fanaticism of the rulers do not take place covertly is shown around the world. On 27th July 1933, a squad of the Marine SA drives the Jewish cinema and shop owner Oskar Dankner and his alleged lover Adele Edelmann through the town with signs hung around their necks. An incident that is seen by many residents.

Barthold Heinrich Brockes

*22th September 1680

† 16th January 1747

German author, studies Law and Philosophy, alderman in Ritzebüttel, Works: "Landleben in Ritzebüttel" (Rural life in Ritzebüttel) and seventh part "Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott" (Earthly pleasures in God)

Bleick Max Bleicken

*27th May 1869

† 18th June 1959

Lawyer and economist, first mayor of Cuxhaven, opening of the Ritzebüttel school and the town hall

Oskar Dankner and Adele Edelmann

* 1890

* 1910

† 7th December 1938

† 1967

Businessman and cinema owner shop assistant

27th July 1933 public humiliation and smear campaign by the National Socialists incl. being driven through the streets.

Overview of incorporations

Contract of sale between Hamburg and Wolderich Lappe for the Ritzebüttel annex from 31.07.1394

Poem by Heinrich Heine, probably 1823

Chronicle of the city's history

1340 – 1618

- **13th-15th c.** The Hanseatic League dominates trade in Northern and Central Europe
- **1348/49** The plague rages through Europe with around 15 m deaths
- **1492** Columbus discovers America – the time of expeditions begins.
- **1517** Start of the Reformation, Luther's 95 Theses
- **1618** Start of the Thirty Years' War with a total of 3 to 4 m deaths

Around 1340: Completion of Ritzebüttel Castle by the Lords of Lappe as the centre of the dominion, and securing the estuary of the Lower Weser and Lower Elbe

1393: The Hamburgers storm the castle

1394: Ritzebüttel Castle is sold with all its possessions by the knights from Lappe to the Hanseatic city of Hamburg on 31.7.1394. Thus Ritzebüttel became an annex to Hamburg.

Around 1570: The town name "Kuckshaven" appears for the first time

1618: The embankment of the "Neues Feld" (New Field) commences, as does the construction of a harbour of refuge and for the winter

1700 – 1825

- **18th c.** Russia's rise to become a great power
- **1756 – 1763** Prussia asserts itself as a European great power in the Seven Years' War
- **1789** The start of the French Revolution
- **1804 – 1815** Napoleon dominates Europe
- **1815** Congress of Vienna, reorganisation of Europe

Around 1700: Erection of the Kugelbake as a navigation aid for shipping

1717: Ritzebüttel is flooded during the Christmas Flood of 1717. All coastal regions suffer major losses

1732: Construction of the "Alte Liebe" (Old Love) pier commences

1816: Official opening of Cuxhaven as a seaside resort by alderman Amandus Abendroth

1825: The "Neues Feld" is flooded by a severe storm tide. The dykes burst

1835 – 1885

- **19th c.** Beginning of industrialisation and the height of colonialism
- **1835** The first train runs through German counties
- **1848** March Revolution – the foundation of the German nation state fails
- **1871** Foundation of the German Reich (Empire)
- **1884/1885** Foundation of German colonies in Africa

From 1835 The start of the regular seaside transport services from and to Cuxhaven

1848: First electromagnetic telegraph between Cuxhaven and Hamburg

1871: Ritzebüttel gains dominion status with 13 parishes. The 1st meeting of the Cuxhaven local council takes place in 1874

1881: The railway line Harburg – Cuxhaven is opened

1885: The first fishing port is opened

1893 – 1908

- **1886** First car made by Benz and Daimler
- **1889** Official opening of the Eifel Tower in Paris
- **1890** Chancellor Prince Otto von Bismarck is overthrown
- **1896** First Olympic Games in the modern era in Athens
- **1900** Boxer Rebellion in China against the colonial rule

1893: Cuxhaven becomes a garrison town. The navy artillery division moves in and military bases are set up

1889/1900: The Hamburg America Line is established and the Augusta Victoria sets sail from Cuxhaven as the first ever cruise. The Hapag Halls are built at the Steubenhöft

1902: Today's world-famous "Horse race on the seabed" is held for the first time in the mudflats by Duhnen. The first Strandkörbe (beach chairs) were set up in Döse.

1907: The parish of Cuxhaven now becomes a town. On 31.12.1905, the Cuxhaven parish has around 11,000 inhabitants

1908: The sea fish market is established. Fishing has developed in Cuxhaven since 1891. The first fish auction hall is erected in 1899

1918 – 1948

- **1914 – 1918** First World War
- **1918** End of the monarchy in Germany
- **1919/1920** Treaty of Versailles, the start of the Weimar Republic
- **1924 – 1929** The "Golden Twenties" and the Great Depression
- **1939 – 1945** Second World War

1918/19: The Workers and Soldiers Council takes over power, and proclamation of the "Socialist Republic of Cuxhaven"

1933 – 1945: The National Socialist era and the Second World War from 1939 onwards. Persecution of Jews even occurs in Cuxhaven. So-called "Stolpersteine" (metaphorically: stumbling block) in town commemorate the people who were murdered, deported, displaced or driven to suicide

1943 – 1945: "Whitsun Attack", land mines in more North Sea areas and loss in the fishing fleet

1946: Cuxhaven votes democratically and becomes a part of Lower Saxony. In the so-called "Hungerwinter", the Duhnen bathing jetty was used as firewood.

Restrictions on fishing by the occupying forces make life difficult

1948: Housing cooperatives start building housing, thereby changing the character of the town. Due to the large influx of refugees, displaced persons and soldiers, the demand for housing is growing

1962 – 2023

- **1949** Division of Germany and the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany

- **1949** NATO is established during the “Cold War” between the USA and the Soviet Union
- **1961** Erection of the Berlin Wall
- **1964 - 1975** Vietnam War
- **1990** German reunification
- **1993** Establishment of the European Union

1962: Cuxhaven is hit by a storm tide. Dykes that are too low and too weak are reinforced with new main dykes and flood barriers are erected

1968/1969: The navy is relocated from Cuxhaven to Wilhelmshaven

1977: Cuxhaven loses its status as a district, it becomes a “large, independent town” with just under 60,000 inhabitants and is the largest North Sea health resort. Deep-sea fishing collapses

1997: Opening of the new multi-purpose transshipment hub, EuropaKai

2023: Cuxhaven thinks sustainably and innovatively. Structural change already begins in the 2000s with the development of the offshore industry and sustainable tourism. In 2021, 48,318 inhabitants live in the town

A stroll around Cuxhaven

Every day is different at the North Sea's Elbe estuary. From the mudflats to the coastal heathlands, the diverse nature is a great place to go on discovery tours. You can visit one of the historic buildings or go to a modern museum.

Whether you are interested in history, maritime topics or are art-minded, when you take a walk around the town you will discover a bit of everything. The following pages present selected places to suit all tastes, from museums to observation decks by the sea. Further links will take you to related websites with corresponding visitor information.

Let it inspire you!

Alte Liebe (Old Love) – observation deck

You get a fantastic view of the Elbe from the two-story Alte Liebe observation deck from 1733. Even today, ships still set sail from the Alte Liebe. People often meet on the Alte Liebe to admire the huge ships from all over the world that pass close by: from April to October, the ship announcement service issues information on type, size, origin and destination of the ships that pass by here.

Other attractions: The semaphore from 1884, which shows force and direction of the wind, the Hamburg lighthouse and the “swimming lighthouse” Feuerschiff Elbe 1.

Hapag Halls – historical site and event venue

The Hapag-Halls were built between 1900 and 1902. This was the terminal building where passengers checked in before boarding the ships. The expansion of the Steubenhöfts after 1910 meant that the largest ships in the world were able to dock here. The director of the Hapag shipping company, Albert Ballin, played an important role in shaping overseas passenger traffic. Ballin is also considered to be a kind of “inventor” of cruises, as he began providing luxury trips by ship at the end of the 19th century. The historic emigration halls are still functional today and are unique worldwide. Guided tours and exhibitions take place in the Hapag halls and they can be booked as a venue for events.

Kugelbake – historic landmark

The Kugelbake, Cuxhaven's main landmark, was originally a navigational aid for sailors. In the Middle Ages, the word “Bake” referred to navigational aids. The wooden Kugelbake, which is 29 metres in height, indicates where the Elbe ends and the North Sea begins and marks the northernmost point of Lower Saxony. A fire used to burn in the Kugelbake at night for orientation purposes.

Other attractions: The Kugelbake fortress (the only surviving German naval fortress), which you can visit.

Windstärke 10 – Museum

The exhibition focuses on the people and their adventures at sea. The museum building is made up of two historical fish packing halls from the 1930s that are connected by a modern middle hall. Numerous films and listening stations convey lasting impressions of the dangers and challenges of sea voyages, and realistic enactments make the visit an experience.

Other attractions: Together, Cuxhaven's old fishing port from 1908 and the new fishing port near the museum form one of the largest fishing ports in Germany.

Ritzebüttel Castle – historical building and event venue

Ritzebüttel Castle is one of the oldest surviving secular buildings in Lower Saxony. Concerts, cabaret events, readings, talks and art exhibitions are held in the restored rooms of the castle. The ballrooms can also be hired for events. Ritzebüttel castle is also a popular venue for weddings.

Other attractions: The castle gardens with its various buildings and sculptures, which at 8.5 ha corresponds to the dimensions of the former fortification.

Wadden Sea – World Heritage Site and natural landscape

The Wadden Sea National Park, which is unique worldwide, was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2009. It is one of the largest wetlands in the world with fascinating fauna and flora. You can go on an expedition to explore the mudflats by either hiking or riding on a mudflat wagon.

Other attractions: the UNESCO World Heritage Site Wadden Sea Visitor Centre, which shows its visitors the native fauna and flora and informs them of the threats and the special features of the maritime landscape.

Coastal heathland – hiking paths and natural landscape

The area of coastal heathland stretches from Cuxhaven-Duhnen and Holte-Spangen across Berensch-Arensch to Oxstedt. Heathland made up of crowberries, heather, sandy grassland and moorlands has been preserved on the coastal Geest. It is the largest continuous extent of heathland on the mainland along the German North Sea coast. Even today, grazing with Heideschnucken (a type of sheep), goats and Heck cattle contributes to its preservation. The area can be explored via the numerous cycling and hiking paths, and from the observation platform.

The “Bauerndome” in Lüdingworth and Altenbruch – historic buildings

The churches St. Jacobi in Lüdingworth and St. Nicolai in Altenbruch (both built around 1200) are two of the so-called “Bauerndome” (farmer's cathedrals) in the county of Hadeln. They are both situated on a hill (terp), so they usually remained dry during flooding and provided refuge for the people living in the surrounding area. The term Bauerndome comes from the fact that these churches were built and financed by rich farmers from the Hadeln county.

Duhner Ringwall – historical site and archaeological monument

The Ringwall (circular rampart) is an archaeological monument in the Duhnen heathland between Duhnen and Sahlenburg and is around 3,500 years old. It is an embankment, which is built in the shape of a circle. This unique archaeological site has no comparison in Central Europe. Although the circular rampart is weather-beaten these days, 1.20 metres of it are still well preserved. The interior of the rampart has a diameter of at least 40 metres and its entrance used to face the east. There were two small mounds in the interior of which one still remains. The precise use of the rampart remains unknown.

Joachim-Ringelnatz-Museum – Museum

Joachim Ringelnatz went to sea as soon as he left school. At the end of the First World War, he was stationed in Cuxhaven with the Navy and it was this time in his life that he described in his autobiography “Als Mariner im Krieg” (At war as a marine). The museum displays many paintings and drawings, poetry and prose collections. Together with photos, documents, letters and statements from his contemporaries, his life and work is revealed. Special exhibitions highlight certain aspects of his work.

Dicke Berta lighthouse – historical building

The “Dicke Berta” (Fat Berta) is a lighthouse, which is 13 metres in height, situated in the area of the Elbe estuary at the Altenbruch harbour. Its operation began in 1897, as the existing lighthouses no longer sufficed to guarantee a safe passage for all ships. Due to a change in the fairway, it was moved a few metres and was put out of service in 1983. You can visit the tower and it can also be used as a venue for weddings.

Other attractions: Hadelers Seebandsdeich (dyke), which was replaced by the Neufelder Seedeich. Today, there is a listed 130-metre-long section with an information pavilion to the west of the Dicke Berta on the cycle path between Cuxhaven and Hamburg.

Altenwalder Burg (Altenwalde Fortress) – historical site

The Altenwalder Burg, of which a rampart has been preserved, is located on the highest point of Cuxhaven. The rampart is still at least 1.50 metres in height although it was changed significantly as a result of military action during the 1st and 2nd World Wars.

The original fortress was erected in the 9th century. A 100 × 60 metre rampart quadrangle with sloped corners was laid out. How long it existed and what it was used for is unknown. Before the construction of the fortress, part of the site served as a burial ground, which was filled with urns from the 1st - 5th century.

Other attractions: A tour called "Experience History", which is designed as a hiking trail, leads to four other important historical sites in Altenwalde: Wolde Monastery, the Saxon burial ground, the old parish church of St. Cosmas and Damianus and a settlement from the Middle Ages. The starting point is the display board at Hauptstr. 75.