

A health cure in the Aachen spa – already the Romans were plagued by rheumatic illnesses and loved the healing power of the hot springs

Those who say “A” like “Aachen” must also say “B” like “Bad Aachen” (Aachen spa). Aachen is a city of water. It has the hottest springs north of the Alps. The history of Aachen is closely connected with that of its “Thermen” (Baths). Not only have the baths given Aachen its name – “Aachen” stems from the Germanic word for water “ahha” - but since people have discovered the healing powers of the Aachen water, many people have found alleviation and healing of their illnesses here.

Already the Celts and the Romans, and prior to those presumably the people of the stone and bronze ages, knew about the beneficial powers of the “aquae granni”. Those “Waters of Grannus” came splashing up from the depths and were used for healing purposes. Charlemagne was another admirer of Aachen water. His biographer Einhard tells us that “he [Charlemagne] loved the warm waters deeply and has often made use of them”. The Emperor’s love of Aachen’s water is one of the reasons that Aachen became the Emperor’s residency.

Carolus Magnus as well as other sovereigns over the following centuries also enjoyed Aachen’s water. Aachen’s excellent reputation as well as the unmistakable sulphurous smell of its spring water made it ever more famous.

Whereas in other places the mineral springs and healing waters were still surrounded by the mist of medieval superstition, the people of Aachen already began to develop modern tourism strategies around their hot springs. They didn’t have to wait long before they succeeded: Within a short period of time Aachen became a “fashionable” spa and attracted many visitors from a social background where curing was part of one’s lifestyle. The rich and the famous came from all over Europe in order to enjoy the well promoted pleasures of a bathing cure as well as other pleasant ways to spend their time.

There was however one critic of the splashing variety of Aachen bathing culture – Frederick the Great. His comments about Aachen were very disparaging: "...this place where so many people go in order to distract themselves and from where so many leave without having been healed at all; where the doctors' talk is concerned with their own glory, which plays its game like the intrigues of lovers; where finally infirmity and prejudices attract people from all parts of the globe".

Frederick's obvious doubts of the healing forces of the Aachen water have long been proved inaccurate by modern science. Due to the water temperature and not less than 19 different mineral elements in the water, which contains sulphur, sodium chloride and hydrocarbonate, Aachen water is very healing. It has a positive effect on illnesses of the bones, muscles, joints and skin.

The healing qualities of the water as well as the special atmosphere of this spa city, which combines modern curing facilities with a two thousand year old bathing tradition, attract a large number of visitors. Every year about 8.000 patients decide to be treated with Aachen spring water in one of the three sanatoriums. In the beginning of 2001 the Carolus Thermen Bad Aachen have opened their doors to a fascinating world of peace, warmth and relaxation. The bath's wide range of healing cures combined with a marvellous atmosphere continue the Aachen bathing tradition that was once started by the Romans.

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