

Itinerary

Travel to Lüdenscheid

Schulte-Elektrotechnik: Guided Tour

How SMEs reduce GHG Emissions

Networking Dinner with Regional Leaders:

Welcoming Remarks - Sebastian Wagemeyer, Mayor of Lüdenscheid; Commissioner Grace Arnold, MN Department of Commerce; Sabine Engel

Panel - Doug Biehn, Council Member City of White Bear Lake; Ken Smith, president and CEO of Ever-Green Energy; Guido Wallraven, Principal Stadt-Land-Fluss Bonn; Marcus Müller, City of Lüdenscheid



Lüdenscheid is on the edge of the Bergisches Land Nature Park, which is 2,027 km².

Traveling Without a Car

If the infrastructure is there, it's easy and faster than you think



The Hagen train station where we transferred to a bus that took us to Lüdenscheid.

Today, the Delegates from Rochester and Duluth and I said good-bye to Münster. We walked in the light rain along the tree-lined bike highway - which was as full of bikers as any sunny day here - to the train station where we caught our train to Hagen. Less than an hour later (some of us may have enjoyed a quick nap) we disembarked in Hagen where we caught the direct bus to Lüdenscheid and walked to the hotel.

This trip took us about two hours, which isn't much slower than the hour and a half ride it would have been with a car.

Considering we also did not know exactly where we were going, what platform we needed to be on, or where to catch the bus, it was also simple.

On the train people were working, napping, chatting, and reading. It was time you could use to do something productive or pleasurable, which would have not been an option if one drove. The trains are also

quiet, clean, and smooth. It is a pleasant experience, and I wish Minnesota had a system connecting our major cities and university towns. It would be fun to catch the train in the Twin Cities for a weekend in Duluth, make getting to the Mayo Clinic a breeze, or be a convenient way for college students in Morris or Mankato to go home for the holidays.

True, there is a romance to trains, but as I think more about the benefits it also occurs to me that more Minnesotans traveling long distances by train, especially in winter, would probably reduce the number of traffic accidents and fatalities. It would also increase mobility for people and help us reduce our emissions from transportation. It would create a lot of construction, service, and logistics jobs.

After this experience I am now an advocate for a German-inspired train system in Minnesota, and I think my fellow Minnesotans would be on board too.



Left, spruce trees in the forest surrounding Lüdenscheid.

Right, Doug Biehn, Sam Crosby, and Dr. Wayne Kazmierczak, learn about the bark beetles.



O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum

Lüdenscheid’s spruce trees are under attack, but inspiration can be found in mitigation efforts

There are many trees in Lüdenscheid, it is on the edge of the Bergisches Land Nature Park, after all. The mix of spruce, beech, and oak is reminiscent of Minnesota, however, when you are traveling through the hills something troubling stands out. In many places, there are clear-cut areas and stands of red hued spruce. These spruce trees, which are not native to Lüdenscheid or North Rhine Westphalia, are under attack from bark beetles, and are quickly dying in large numbers.

Because the spruce trees are not native, it was decided that they would not be replaced with new spruce trees. The beech and oak trees are native, and would therefore seem a natural choice for reforestation, but there are other factors to consider.

The climate of Lüdenscheid is changing, a fact documented by the climate monitoring station at Lüdenscheid’s high school which has been in operation since

the 1800s. One of the more profound changes in Lüdenscheid’s climate is similar to a change Minnesota is experiencing: shifting precipitation amounts and patterns. This alteration in precipitation patterns effects the trees that can live in this area.

Experts are concerned that the beech and oak trees will not be able to survive in Lüdenscheid and the surrounding areas in the near future, and they are actively researching what trees might be good options to help reforest the areas the bark beetles are decimating.

While this is overall a scary scenario, I find two parts of it inspiring. First, the decision not to replace a non-native species with more of its ilk is something to applaud and something Minnesota should take note of, especially as interest in preserving pollinator habitat rises in our state. Second, that the experts are thinking ahead and planning for the future. They know people value the trees

for many reasons and they are asking how they can keep that value even with a changing climate. Conservation and mitigation can clearly go together.



Showing the damage the bark beetles do to the trees.



Spruce trees under attack from the bark beetle.

Waste Not, Want Not

Heat recovery is environmentally friendly and good for business

Schulte-Elektrotechnik, a manufacturer in Lüdenscheid, has impressive facilities, of which their heating system is the most impressive.

The factory is equipped with technology that recovers heat produced by their plastic injection machines, their air compressor, and IT modules and stores it or uses it to heat their facilities.

The installation of this system was expensive but is paying for itself by virtually eliminating the need for another heat source.

To learn more about this topic, read our interview with Ken Smith, Chief Executive and President of Ever-Green Energy, in Special Edition: Renewable Businesses.

Cultural Fun Fact

Did you know...

In Germany, you will not often automatically be brought water when you sit down at a restaurant. Usually, you need to ask for it. When you do, you will be asked if you want water “with gas or without gas” – carbonated or uncarbonated. Either way you answer, you will be brought mineral water, not tap water. And you will never be given ice.

The carbonated water here is not as heavily carbonated as in the US. It is refreshing, and more often than not, comes in glass bottles, which Germans still use with great frequency because they can be infinitely recycled.



Glass bottles are very common in Germany. We did not see nearly the amount of plastic convenience products that are in the US while in North Rhine Westphalia.