



A beautiful sunset beyond the beach at the small harbour town of Wustrow.

in less salubrious parts of towns and cities across the former German Democratic Republic. We soon discover on our walk that Wustrow is blighted by its fair share of soulless-looking, beige abodes and blessed with lovely half-timbered houses and tastefully restored captain's cottages. The peninsula's undoubted gem in terms of

architectural elegance, Ahrenshoop, lies a few kilometres north, and it is where we have lunch the next day. A once sedate fishing settlement nestled in and around the dunes, it found favour with the landscape artist Paul Müller-Kaempff, who was so taken with its beauty and seclusion that he

established an artist colony in the hamlet at the end of the 19th century. More than 125 years later, Ahrenshoop remains popular with artists, but also with cashed-up Berliners, whose luxury sports cars and SUVs sit on driveways outside old coastal manor houses renovated into chic holiday homes. Further impacting its idyll are the swathes of local tourists moseying about having a gander at the impressive buildings, and eating ice creams and burgers in the sun.

Having indulged in both activities ourselves, we go for a quick splash in the bone-achingly cold sea, before heading back to the finnhütten and what has become our evening routine of dinner, cards, and sitting in the dunes to watch the sunset. It is an understandably popular pastime on the peninsula, and every night families huddle on blankets, and couples in camping chairs sip sparkling wine and watch the sky turn a fiery orange as the sun sinks into the Baltic.

On our last evening, what appears to be a couple of university-aged women and a male companion throw off their clothes and rush – yelling and laughing – into the sea. They are down the beach a bit and away from everyone else, so there is no sense of exhibition or the potential to offend, rather an unshackling from some of the burdens of everyday life and the joy that can bring.

The elegant Ahrenshoop lies in the dunes a few kilometres north of Wustrow. PHOTOS: JEFF KAVANAGH

