

At home with "Karls": That's how strawberry King Robert Dahl lives

Is "Karls strawberry farm" coming to Dresden soon? Many Ostseurlauber from Saxony hope that know and love the legendary theme park from their travels. But what is the secret of success of the Erbeerhof? A visit.

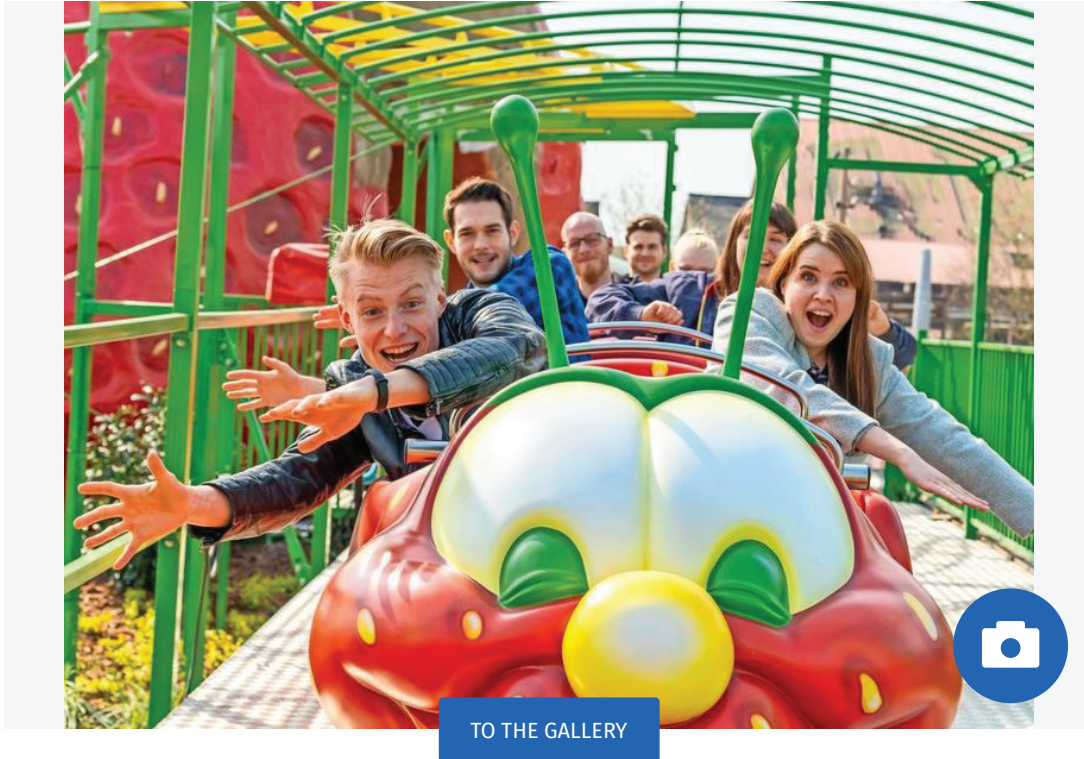


Little Kisses joke. One would have expected more strawberries – for someone who earns his money with it. Or more aptly: In the trade with the red summer fruits the number one in north and east Germany is. "Although I have three rows in the garden, but they do not look as good as in my company," says Robert Dahl, while sitting in his house at an old round table, from which you look through floor-to-ceiling glass into the green can.

Dahl is one of the largest entrepreneurs in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. His strawberry empire now includes five agricultural-oriented theme parks, the Karls adventure villages. The company still earns about 30 percent of its annual sales by harvesting and selling the fruit itself. Dahl employs almost 1,000 permanent employees, and more than 2,000 harvest workers are added during the season.

Also read: [Will Karls strawberry farm soon come to Dresden?](#)

The oldest and largest location, at the same time headquarters of the company, is located in Rövershagen near Rostock . There were strawberries for self-picking and shortly after a free playground. Strawberries and games – the DNA of today's adventure villages was created. In the meantime, there are also holiday homes and a hotel.



In the summer of 2019 several new attractions have been opened in Karls Erlebnisdörfer. The entrepreneur Robert Dahl has invested 18 million euros in the company's locations.

A taste for things that are worn out

How does someone live who goes to work in an amusement park every morning ? First, relatively hidden on a three-sided farm and a village that is a stone's throw from Rövershagen . The style? Rustic and very cozy. A well-balanced blend of Mediterranean warmth and Scandinavian clarity.

The Dahl family at home has an atmosphere where you have to be careful not to put your feet on the chair in front of you. Warm natural tones, a lot of original wood, climbing plants grow on the terrace roof. A fondness for things that are worn, not posh and just not fancy, not only characterizes the inventory of adventure villages, but also the style in Dahl's private environment.



The Dahl family only travel with hand luggage

The 48-year-old lives in his home with his three children (12, 14 and 16 years old) and wife Stephanie. She is also a leader at Karls. "Anyone who runs a family business of this size knows that the company belongs to the family. At home, work and the private flow together," says Dahl. "You really never have really free. The whole thing is also a big responsibility. But I love what we do. I was able to turn my hobby into a profession."

In this respect, the moments of relaxation and retreat home are at best short. Hobbies? "Earlier yes, not today. I try to get on with what I really need. Nothing should burden me." Therefore, he and his family had a habit of completing travel only with their hand luggage. Dahl: "It's better to wash in between than to carry too much. Anyone who knows me knows that I often wear the same simple style anyway. "T-shirt, sneaker. He attaches importance to restraint.

Woman from Canada sold Dahl his current home

Dahl bought his home-yard in 1998 from an elderly lady from Canada. The property had fallen behind after the fall of the Wall. She had spoken to him about a coffee in the strawberry farm in Rövershagen. "If I did not know someone looking for such a house. Sure, I knew someone. Myself. The next day we sat with the notary. "But the clearing took a good one and a half years. "There were certainly ten Trabbis around here." Shortly thereafter, he met his wife.

His business is largely done by Dahl on the phone when he's not there. "I do not have a laptop at home. Already an iPad is almost too cumbersome for me. "So that everything is running smoothly, Dahl has developed eight different apps that he needs to keep an eye on his company. Thus, the payroll accounting as well as the stock of

strawberries can be tracked . On a normal day of the season, Karl sells a good 80 tons of strawberries a day.

Strawberries in the electric car

Within 24 hours, the goods must be on sale, which is why the radius in which it is delivered is a maximum of about 250 kilometers. What is not gone in the evening, goes back and will be processed. "If we needed longer, the fruits would not be bad, but not any fresher than the strawberries in the supermarket," explains Dahl .

He then has a hobby: The man drives the topics of electromobility and sustainable energy supply. If he has an appointment where his Tesla can not be recharged directly on site, Dahl takes an electric scooter for the last few kilometers. The is in the trunk ready.

In the meantime, this also takes up a lot of space in the company. In Rostock and Ribnitz-Damgarten, the strawberries are already delivered with e-vans from Streetscooter (the ones with which the Post also travels). "One of my goals is to keep the electricity we can generate from solar panels one day with hydrogen storage until our delivery vehicles can be charged at night. That would be really carbon neutral. "

Pictures of the pumpkin season at Karls:



The calendrical beginning of the fall is already behind us, the meteorological follows on the 23rd of September. Also in Rövershagen autumn has already arrived - in the form of pumpkins.

Children are allowed almost everything

Where do you make business decisions? On the couch or in the shower?

"Especially in the stomach," replies Dahl. His philosophy is that the entrance to all Karl experience villages is basically free. "For some attractions we charge a user fee, but it is important to us that the proportion of free options for children is always large enough."

The entrepreneur immediately shares the idea behind it: "Basically, one could say that I would rather go bankrupt with a full shop than with an empty shop. Seriously, if we attract people and then fail to sell them at least one coffee, we would not be good enough. "

In the US, where Dahl regularly visits amusement parks for intuition, this principle is called pay by ride. Dahl: "If we have kindergarten groups who bring their own food, dispose of the leftovers, use the free Tobeland and really do not buy anything, I still look forward to telling my employees: Stay relaxed! Some children will come back later with their parents. "

The story of "Charles"

The Dahl family returned to Mecklenburg in the early 1990s after working in Schleswig-Holstein. "My father said back then, I should make myself independent there, where we originally came from," said Robert Dahl once. In 1993, strawberries in Mecklenburg were harvested again by the Dahl family on the first ten hectares of land. The namesake for the company was grandfather Karl Dahl.

This has now become a veritable empire: seven locations in three federal states. Everything started with a small farm shop. Today, these have become small amusement parks with many extras.

Nevertheless, the strawberry is still the focus. On about 400 hectares around Rövershagen strawberries are grown every year.

By Benjamin Fischer