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Photographer: Dieter Ruoff

As recognised by UNESCO: Southern Germany's Lively & Green Swabian Alb Biosphere Reserve

www.biosphaerengebiet-alb.de

Biosphärengebiet
& Schwäbische Alb



Story-telling castles

Hosts who introduce you to one of the world's natural wonders

Lively traditions



Photographer: The Health Resort Administration of Bad Urach

Dear reader,

When it comes to choosing a holiday destination, sustainability in all its forms is one of many criteria that people from all over the world consider – as well as the weather, value for money, cultural attractions, beautiful scenery and good food. But the demand for eco-friendly, socially responsible tourism is growing.

Destination Germany ticks all the boxes for a sustainable travel destination. With a national sustainability strategy called 'Perspectives for Germany', the federal government has set specific tasks and goals for the country's development. Green living is part and parcel of everyday life here – from energy-saving measures and conservation of resources through to separating rubbish for recycling. The purity of the water and air is guaranteed by strict regulations, while an exceptional transport network – including extensively funded public transport – allows people to travel in a climate-friendly way. The growth of renewable energies is visible everywhere you turn. And it doesn't end there: an awareness of socio-economic factors such as high education standards, inclusivity and integration is deeply rooted in German society.

Germany is performing very well in international comparisons too: all the German cities on the Green City Index were ranked as either good or very good. Areas of exceptional natural and cultural importance are given special protection in the form of 15 national parks, 16 biosphere reserves and 104 nature parks, as well as 38 UNESCO World Heritage sites.

Sustainability is clearly a key factor in getting more people to visit Destination Germany. This approach is supported by the federal government initiative to develop tourism in rural areas. In many holiday regions, guests are now presented with innovative ways to experience nature, while the first-class options for health and wellness travel combine the traditional and the modern. Every tourism-related product or service – from websites to hotels, museums to

hiking trails – is scrutinised for accessibility. Businesses and organisations have launched a broad range of initiatives to develop sustainable tourism products. A number of certification schemes help travellers make informed choices.

In 2013 Germany's first nationwide competition for sustainable tourism regions saw experts assess holiday destinations up and down the country according to 50 criteria, and produced an up-to-date overview of the sustainable travel products that are available.

We invite you to discover Destination Germany – Sustainable Germany. In this brochure, called 'Naturally unique', we present to you a host of natural, unique and sustainable travel experiences.

Happy travelling!
The German National Tourist Board

Discover Destination Germany at

 www.germany.travel

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 www.twitter.com/GermanyTourism

 www.youtube.com/user/DestinationGermany



Saarland Made for Hiking

The Saarland, with its extensive network of premium trails, promises hiking at its best. The UNESCO biosphere reserve Bliesgau, located in the southeast of the region, invites hikers to explore its enchanting landscape on well-sign-posted trails that offer a wide variety of attractions:

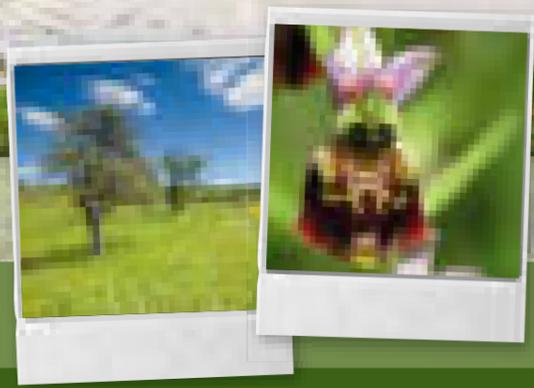
Be it a gourmet trail featuring a number of restaurants on the way, hiking through forests and across meadows, enjoying lovely views across the border and over to France or peaceful rambles on the Way of St James

– take your pick!

Superb hiking in the Bliesgau biosphere reserve

Offer includes

- two overnights including breakfast
- packed lunches for all hikes
- map and travel guide
- use of sauna



Contact:
 Tourismus Zentrale Saarland, Franz-Josef-Röder-Straße 17, 66119 Saarbrücken,
 Phone: +49 (0)681 / 927 20 0, Fax: +49 (0)681 / 927 20 40, info@tz-s.de,
 www.visitsaarland.co.uk, www.toerisme-saarland.nl



Destination Germany – naturally unique

Discover 18 regions – chosen for their exemplary sustainability concepts and found in all parts of Germany – and find out about different aspects of sustainability from accommodation to accessibility.

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Take a deep breath and soak up your surroundings

If you think Germany only has big cities, then think again: because around one third of the country is covered by **woodland**, and a quarter of the land area is located within the **100-plus nature parks**.

And that's not all – three **natural landscapes** have been given UNESCO World Heritage status, **15 biosphere reserves** provide model examples of how man and nature can live in harmony, and in **15 national parks** Mother Nature takes the lead.

Discover the **natural diversity** of Germany – from the sea shore to the mountain ranges, from regions of culture to unspoilt forests.

You won't just be at one with nature. You'll be at one with yourself.

Discover more about Germany's finest natural landscapes at: www.germany.travel/natural-landscapes





Green travel

Germany is quickly reached through many different means thanks to its location in the heart of Europe. And once you arrive, the **integrated transport system** ensures your onward journey is hassle-free. **40,000 kilometres of track** provide convenient rail travel to all cities and regions – direct and with the option of **100 per cent green electricity**. The **long-distance coach network** has grown dramatically in recent years, too.

Should you want to get behind the wheel yourself, you'll find a wide range of rental cars running **alternative drive systems** in Germany.

Within the towns and cities, you can get around easily thanks to the regular **local public transport** services. If you want to protect the environment – and give your health a boost on your travels – why not hire a bike? **Rental bikes** are available at train stations in many German towns and cities. Explore Germany your way.

Discover more at: www.germany.travel/transport





Sleep tight!

Germany's accommodation industry has long been committed to **environmental protection**. Serving **regional food and drink**, taking care not to waste resources and using **renewable energy** are standard practices in many hotels today. Special certification schemes tell you which places go the extra mile to protect the environment.

For a particularly **green stay**, check in to one of the many eco-hotels and wellness hotels or to an accommodation provider certified under the nationwide Viabono scheme. Or get even closer to nature at one of more than 1,200 campsites across Germany.

Treat yourself to a relaxing stay that's good for you and the environment.

Discover more at: www.germany.travel/accommodation





The heart of the Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park – a UNESCO World Natural Heritage site since 2009

A man-made Warft hill on one of the Hallig islands



→ Discover more at: www.germany.travel/naturally-hallig-islands

Carriage rides to a Hallig island

Where land and sea become one The flat, undyked Hallig islands situated in the Wadden Sea are the perfect place to experience life on the coastal mudflats and the constant ebb and flow of the tides. Up to 30 times a year the islands are completely submerged by water – a perfectly normal occurrence for residents, a source of fascination for visitors.

Pair of northern gannets | Children learn about the Wadden Sea



The houses are built on protective man-made hills, known as *Warften*. When the water recedes after a couple of hours, life returns to normal.

These sparsely populated islands were formed by storm tides hundreds of years ago. Today they serve as a natural breakwater, protecting the coastline on the mainland. In 2001 the inhabitants of the five larger Hallig islands (Gröde, Hooge, Langeness, Nordstrandischmoor and Oland) voluntarily opted to join the existing Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea biosphere reserve as a development zone in order to farm more sustainably and to live in harmony with nature.

People and nature in perfect harmony The coastal wetlands and salt marshes are home to some 250 species of animal that you won't find anywhere else on earth. Every spring and every autumn, millions of migratory birds stop at the Wadden Sea as they journey between their breeding grounds in Siberia, Greenland and Canada and their winter habitat in the south. When the tide is out, the sea bed provides them with plentiful food for their long trip.

Between the coast and the Hallig islands Here, the journey is the destination. If you travel to the Hallig islands by boat, you might see seal colonies, complete with seal pups, or learn from a fishermen what delicious offerings are to be found in the sea.

When the tide is out on the mudflats, you can walk across the sea bed, but only in the company of one of the expert guides, who'll tell you all about the mudflat worms, the molluscs and the marine life

in the tidal channels. You might even find some amber, a highly sought-after material used in traditional regional jewellery.

Magical traditions and customs Each season brings a new spectacle to the Hallig islands. At the end of February traditional bonfires known as *biike* are lit to drive out the winter. Spring sees the arrival of the migratory birds and the Brent Goose Festival. Whether visiting for the day or staying overnight, guests are always welcome to join in with the local customs such as Frisian bowling or the lock festival. You can also admire the traditional costumes that have been making a reappearance on celebratory occasions since the mid-90s. In summer the salt marshes are in bloom and you can explore the Wadden Sea on foot. In autumn, a strong breeze blows across the mudflats, and lovingly maintained museums and exhibitions offer shelter from the wind and the elements. And in winter? The cold months are a time of idyllic peace and quiet with only the occasional roar of the sea to be heard.



Highlights

- **Living history:** Captain Tadsen's House on Ketelswarf hill on Langeness island bears the curved gable typical of the islands, and inside there are beautiful murals, ceiling frescos and over 1,600 Dutch wall tiles
- **Nature discovery on Hooge island:** Man & mudflat discovery centre, tidal aquarium, historical Frisian house, restaurant and storm floods cinema
- **Creative contemplation:** Photo workshops held in the islands' only four-star hotel, Anker's Hörn on Langeness
- **Painting on the Hallig islands:** Watercolour courses on Hooge – for beginners, advanced students or groups



AWARD-WINNING!
2012 Green Globe Award, Viabono Cross for services to the environment & 2013 'Werkstatt N' German Council for Sustainable Development quality seal

Beach on Juist Island

Where climate comes first The long and narrow island of Juist is possibly the longest sand bank in the world. To many, it is aptly known as *Töwerland* – magical land. To preserve its enchanting ways for future generations, Juist is focusing on sustainability: the island aims to be carbon-neutral by 2030. Lots of individual projects are aimed at achieving this ambitious target.

Tourism is by far and away the most important source of income for the islanders. Climate change and the associated rise in water levels would hit the island hard. The island's residents have therefore decided to take an active role and 'change with the climate'. Over 70 per cent of the 100,000-plus holidaymakers who visit this Wadden Sea island each year are regular guests. Some families have been coming for generations and care deeply about the heritage and future of their 'home from home', which is why they too support the Klimainsel ('climate island') project.

Free from cars – free from CO₂ On this car-free island, people and goods travel by horse and cart. Even the rubbish is

collected by horse-drawn carriage, and the police ride bicycles. Only the medical services, fire brigade and port workers are allowed to call upon the aid of a combustion engine.

A good learning environment Children on the island are introduced to the subject of energy at a young age through project days at the nursery or the island school. There are also fun, age-appropriate opportunities for younger holiday guests to learn all about energy and the climate, including exciting experiments and activities on the beach. The 'climate change' kid's university in summer attracts more than 600 visiting children, parents and grandparents to a range of talks at the National Park House.

'Climate change' kid's university on the Wadden Sea | The Juist Sail – the island's signature attraction



Horse and cart in the town of Juist

➔ Discover more at: www.germany.travel/naturally-juist

A year-round holiday For years, visitors other than families have been enjoying beach holidays here during their summer break, thanks to efforts by the island to broaden its appeal: its LOHAS (Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability) initiative, for example, focuses on combining sustainability and pleasure, environment and design. Because of LOHAS and older tourists, the season is getting longer, which boosts social sustainability by creating jobs for skilled workers all year round.

No matter what the season, the heated sea pool attracts swimmers with its warm North Sea water at temperatures of up to 30°C. It also incorporates the Töwervital thalassotherapy centre offering a host of physiotherapy treatments.

A partnership like no other The partnership between the Juist holiday region and its energy supplier is unparalleled in Germany's tourism industry. The power company EWE has devised a three 'e' philosophy: improving energy efficiency, saving energy and developing renewable energies. Since 2008 Juist council

offices have been drawing 100 per cent of their electricity from renewable sources. Accommodation providers and restaurants using green energy are identified with a corresponding logo.



Highlights

- 17 kilometre sandy beach in the heart of the UNESCO World Heritage Wadden Sea
- A dynamic cultural scene featuring a music festival, crime thriller festival and classical music festival
- Guest orchestras – rehearse and perform under the guidance of professional musicians in preparation for a big show
- Guest parliament: holidaymakers who want to make a difference can apply to be a representative and hold discussions with the tourist information service one weekend in the year
- National Park House for information and excursions: guided walks on the mudflats and salt marshes, ornithology and night hikes



The fascinating North Sea

Impressive holiday experiences in the Wadden Sea UNESCO World Heritage Site

Extensive dunes, the healthy sea air and the varied flora and fauna of Lower Saxony's North Sea are worth experiencing in any season. This makes preserving it for coming generations all the more important. It is therefore not without reason that the Wadden Sea in Lower Saxony was declared a national park as early as 1986. A sensible approach to nature conservation is therefore important to all those living along the coast

and on the islands. This includes not only the protection of this unique landscape by means of laws and organisations; the people up here rely mainly on educating future generations and guests about what makes this fascinating landscape so special.

www.die-nordsee.de



Discover the seabed in Butjadingen

Let yourself be inspired by the unique Wadden Sea UNESCO World Heritage Site and learn interesting and amazing facts on your guided tour of the Wadden Sea with our state-certified national park guides. While on your tour, take a closer look at the variety of

molluscs, crustaceans and lugworms and explore far out into the Wadden Sea. The guided walks on the seabed start from Fedderwardsiel (all-season), Eckwarderhörne or Tossens. Request current information: www.butjadingen.de

Beach pirates enter Borkum!

A family adventure characterised by the Wadden Sea, the beach and the North Sea - and the Jolly Roger! Ranging from collecting flotsam and jetsam, a ride on a real horse-drawn carriage to a walk in the tidal flats, the event features everything that budding pirates can discover and conquer in and around the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Lower Saxony's Wadden Sea.

Services and prices: 6 nights with full board, including programme

Dates: 18.08.14 - 24.08.14

Per person:
3-5 years: € 196.00;
6 years and above: € 246.00

E-Mail: borkum@jugendherberge.de

Phone: +49 4922-579

Internet: borkum.jugendherberge.de



Sustainable holiday in Wangerland region

The 27 kilometres of coastline are the hallmark of the resort community Wangerland. The close proximity to the North Sea traditionally stands for leisure-friendly variety - and the idea of sustainability. For example, the National Park visitors' centre in Minsin has spent many decades teaching people how important it is to protect the Wadden Sea. In Schillig a state-of-the-art

"research station" has been getting young people interested in the North Sea nature. The publicly owned company "friesenenergie" uses the North Sea breeze to generate green electricity. And the 4-star campsites in Schillig and Hooksiel are of course ECO-CAMPING certified.

www.wangerland.de



Norden-Norddeich: innovative LED project launched

Six LED light masts show the water level of the North Sea at various locations in Norden and Norddeich. The eye catchers are part of an energy-saving street lighting concept. As part of the LED project "Norden-Norddeich", the Norden municipal utilities saved no effort and have installed specially made LED light masts, which were officially switched on in late November 2013.

The six-metre-high and 30-centimetre-thick pillars show the current level of the tide and indicate whether the tide is coming in or going out

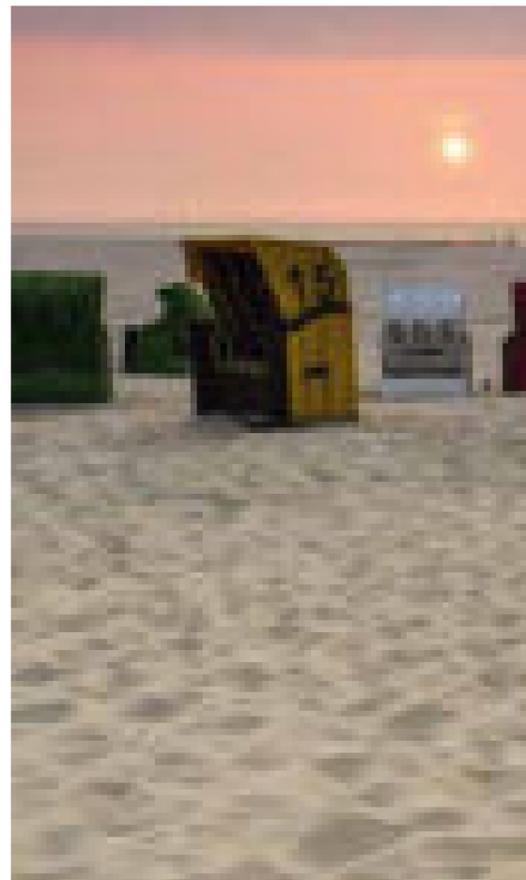
www.norddeich.de

Sustainable holiday on Juist

The car-free North Sea island of Juist is on the way to becoming a carbon-neutral and sustainable resort. In 2010, Juist emitted just 23,653 tonnes of CO₂, which included the arrival and departure of guests. This amount is insignificant in global climate terms. Nevertheless, we want to meet our responsibilities and have formulated our goal: The island is to be carbon neutral by 2030. A great deal has already been done to achieve this goal, for example, free energy consulting, support for service providers with energy-saving measures and the use of green energy, the development of an overall concept for

the energy turnaround on Juist, climate protection concepts, CSR certifications, climate-neutral arrival by train, etc. But we cannot achieve the goal without our guests' help. That is why we try to directly involve them in our "Climate Island" project, for instance, by means of the annual children's workshop "Climate change and energy saving tips on vacation and at home". Our project has meanwhile garnered numerous awards, including from the Federal Environment Ministry. Help us and spend a low-CO₂ holiday on Juist.

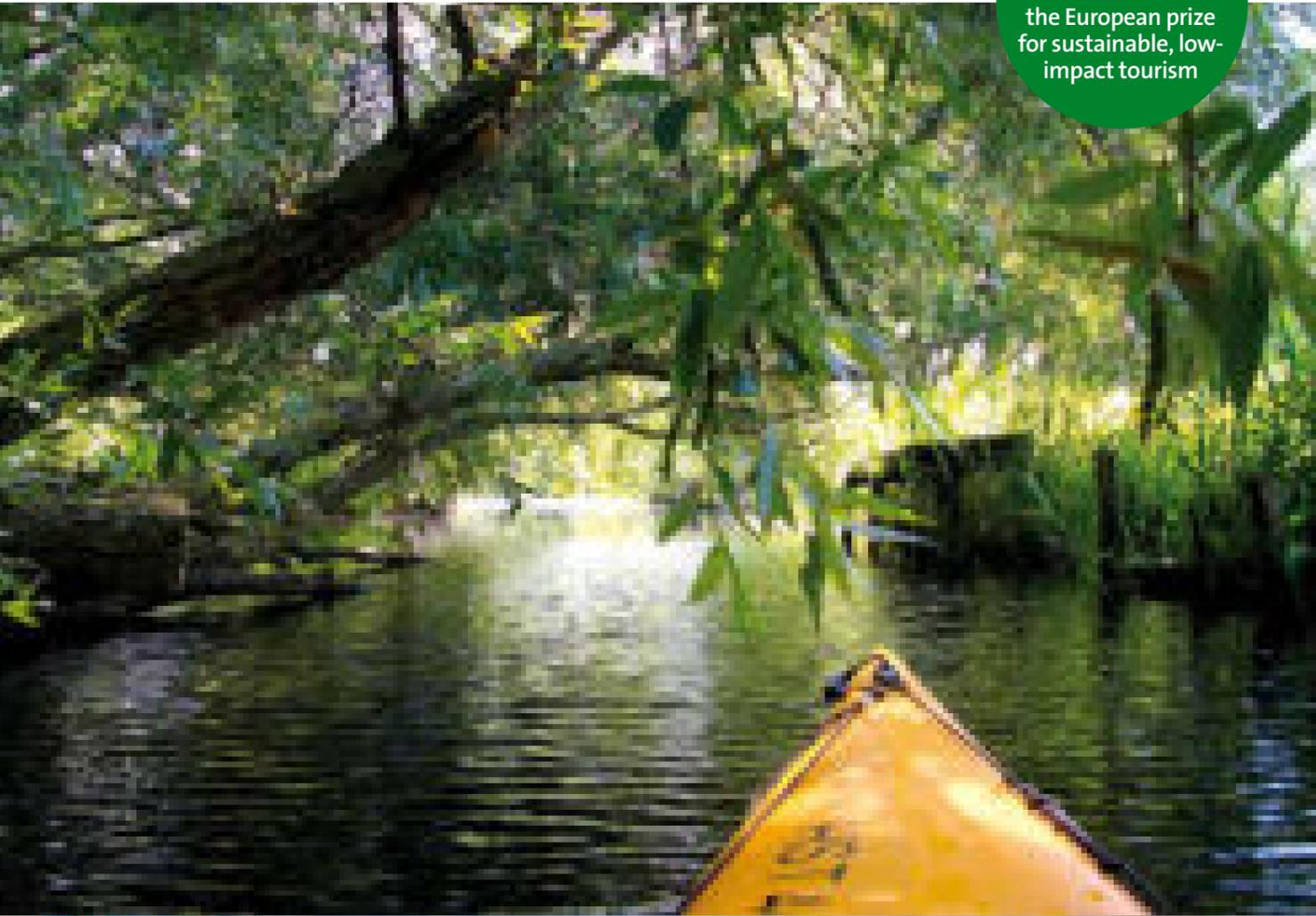
www.juist.de



The Amazon of the north The Peene valley: the Western-Pomeranian riverscape in the far north east of Germany was shaped by the last ice age more than 10,000 years ago. Vikings and Slavs later lived peacefully here together. The region has remained largely untouched by industry, leaving the path clear for an authentic ‘adventure riverscape’ today.

Paddling down the Peene | Below: Otto Lilienthal Museum in Anklam | Springtime in the Peene valley | Great egret

WINNER OF THE EDEN AWARD, the European prize for sustainable, low-impact tourism



→ Discover more at: www.germany.travel/naturally-peene-valley

Fishing on the Peene at Loitz harbour

From the Mecklenburg Switzerland and Lake Kummerow Nature Park in the west, the unspoilt river Peene meanders through one of Europe’s largest continuous areas of fens. It meets the sea in the Peenestrom strait to the east of Anklam, forging a link to the island nature park of Usedom. The string of conservation areas that stretch through the entire region of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania work together to support sustainable tourism. The Abenteuer Flusslandschaft (Adventure Riverscape) network coordinates tourism in the Peenetal Nature Park.

With a gradient of only 24 centimetres over around 100 kilometres, the river’s current is barely noticeable. This is reflected in the flora and fauna: rare moorland species that flourish here include the Baltic orchid, the large copper butterfly and the Carabus menetriesi ground beetle. Large colonies of otters and beavers inhabit the fluvial plain. The Peene also has one of the most varied populations of freshwater fish of any of Germany’s rivers, with rare species such as the river lamprey and spined loach. White-tailed eagles, ospreys, lesser spotted eagles and three different species of tern all nest on the riverbanks that form part of a European bird sanctuary.

Nature at its best Explore the nature park on foot, by bike or from the water. You can also book a cycling tour that includes a return trip in a canoe – a great way to see the scenery from the land and the water. Or, for something a little different, try an e-bike: these bicycles powered by green electricity are ideal for an extra leisurely tour.

Drift gently along the river Whether it’s a Tom Sawyer-style adventure on a raft or the more refined comfort of a luxury floating holiday home, the true pleasure of a boating holiday on the Peene is in the peaceful solitude as the sun goes down. The vessels are motorised, and do not require a licence.

Powered by the sun For a quiet and eco-friendly trip down the Peene you can hire a solar boat with room for up to eleven people. It comes with an on-board guide who’ll tell you all about the region and its people. Or book a green Viking safari, where you won’t need even one drop of fuel thanks to the integrated batteries charged by the solar panels on the roof.

Realise your potential Let nature be your inspiration and set your new creative powers free! No matter how good your arts and crafts skills are, you can express yourself through weaving, bronze sculpting and wood carving on specialist courses.

A taste of grandeur In an area where nature is left to its own devices, plates are generously filled with delicious fish and game dishes and locally farmed produce. For a truly memorable experience, you can dine in the charming setting of a former abbey or manor house.

Highlights

- **Historical attractions** such as the church in Gützkow and the ruins of 13th century Stolpe Abbey
- **Viking graves near Menzlin** as well as Slavic fortifications and burial grounds
- Authentic experiences with **exquisite food and drink in beautifully restored manor houses**
- **Otto Lilienthal Museum in Anklam**, birthplace of this aviation pioneer: exciting events, physics experiments and an outdoor learning space
- **Nature park ranger tours** for school groups





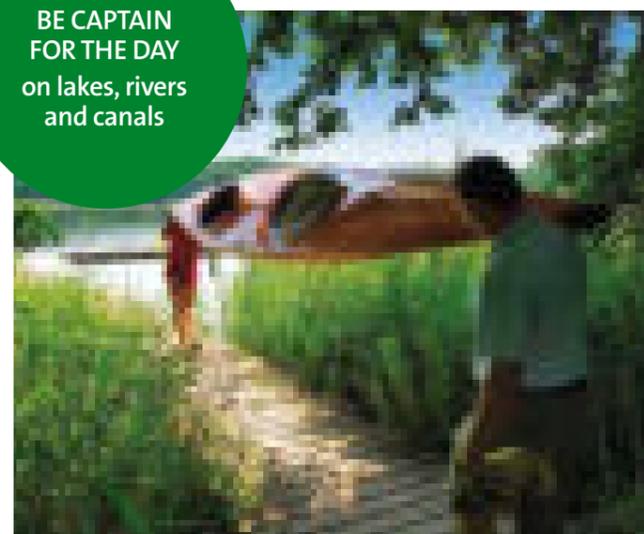
The land of a thousand lakes The Mecklenburg Lakes – ospreys and white-tailed eagles circle in the skies above sweeping woodland, meadows and moors. Dotted in between are the glistening waters of small pools, ponds and vast lakes. Discover the wonders of nature, try out water sports, or kick back and relax on the water’s edge.

The natural treasures of the Mecklenburg Lakes are well protected. Situated in close proximity are three nature parks (Mecklenburg Switzerland & Lake Kummerow, Nossentin/Schwinz Heathland and Feldberg Lakes). At the centre of it all, Müritznational Park safeguards over 320 square kilometres of natural beauty for future generations. An action plan for sustainable tourism, put in place by the Müritznational Park office and local tourism providers, lays out the key points for development in the conservation area.

Holidays beside and on the water An eco-friendly way to explore the surroundings is by canoe – on one-day trips or extended tours. With your camping equipment and provisions on board, you paddle from one lake to the next using muscle power alone – perhaps spotting ospreys and white-tailed eagles along the way. For a little more luxury, you can hire a house boat. On many of the waterways, you don’t even need prior experience or a boating licence for this. From aboard your floating holiday home, you can jump straight into the water. Alternatively, you can experience the

Canoeing | House boat holidays for families | Schloss Ulrichshusen

BE CAPTAIN FOR THE DAY
on lakes, rivers and canals



Müritznational Park: the largest lake located entirely in Germany

→ Discover more at: www.germany.travel/naturally-mecklenburg-lakes

breathtaking beauty of the Mecklenburg Lakes from on board a passenger boat as part of an evening cruise, romantic tour or pirate adventure. No matter where you come ashore, the water quality of the lakes is ideal for swimming.

On foot or by bike through UNESCO natural heritage This lake region and the pilgrimage route from Friedland to Mirow are ideal for walkers. Visitors to Müritznational Park can explore the conservation area on six GPS walking routes. There is also a special trail for exploring the unspoilt beech forests in the Serrahn part of the national park – awarded UNESCO World Heritage status in 2011. En route you may well see red deer, fallow deer and raccoons, as well as an impressive array of insects and fungi living on dead wood.

The flat landscape also lends itself well to cycling. Repair workshops, hire stations and bike-friendly accommodation make the ride even smoother for cyclists.

Setting the standards for barrier-free holidays At many places in the Mecklenburg Lakes, the park’s charm can be enjoyed by everyone. The multi-award-winning HausRheinsberg lakeside hotel, for example, is the world’s first hotel designed specifically to meet the needs of guests with disabilities. Its concept: a retreat for people with physical disabilities, and their partners, children and friends, which sees inclusivity as an expression of modern society.

Relax, unwind. Challenge yourself: guests are invited to try something new and to overcome former obstacles through relaxing or at times physically demanding activities.

Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania Festival Every year between June and September, emerging artists and international stars appear at Germany’s third biggest festival of classical music. Around 120 concerts are staged against spectacular backdrops including palaces, barns and restored stately homes.



Highlights

- Müritzeum – nature discovery centre for all weathers. Home to the biggest freshwater aquarium in Germany
- Bärenwald – western Europe’s biggest bear sanctuary
- Leea – Centre for Renewable Energies in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Neustrelitz
- Tactile guided tours for blind and partially sighted visitors run by the Barlach Foundation in Güstrow



Discover nature on foot

With over **200,000 kilometres of marked trails** and extensive protected natural landscapes, Germany is a dream destination for walkers. Keen hikers, fitness enthusiasts, romantics and nature lovers can roam Germany's countryside on paths ranging from long-distance trails to short circular tours that are perfect for an afternoon stroll.

For an extra special adventure, there are **300 premium trails** approved by the German Institute of Hiking, and **86 routes certified for quality by the German Ramblers' Association** – and these are located all around the country. Teams of experts select these trails based on a range of criteria from terrain and route to the variety of the landscape. These idyllic walks present a great way to explore **unspoilt scenery, quaint villages and historical castles and palaces** – the choice is yours!

No matter where your path leads you in Germany, you're sure to find **places to rest** and **places to eat** on the wayside.

Enjoy Germany, one step at a time.

Discover more about walking in Germany at:

www.germany.travel/hiking





→ Discover more at: www.germany.travel/naturally-uckermark

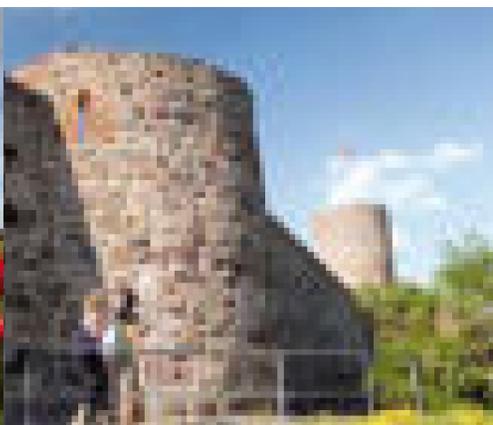
Jetty on Lake Zenssee in the Uckermark region

Simply natural: Uckermark. Up in the north east of the March of Brandenburg, wind turbines rotate on the horizon and the hustle and bustle of city life feels like a distant memory. And yet here is a place with its finger firmly on the pulse: regional producers, energy suppliers and small family businesses are all driving sustainable development as part of an eco-friendly tourism network.

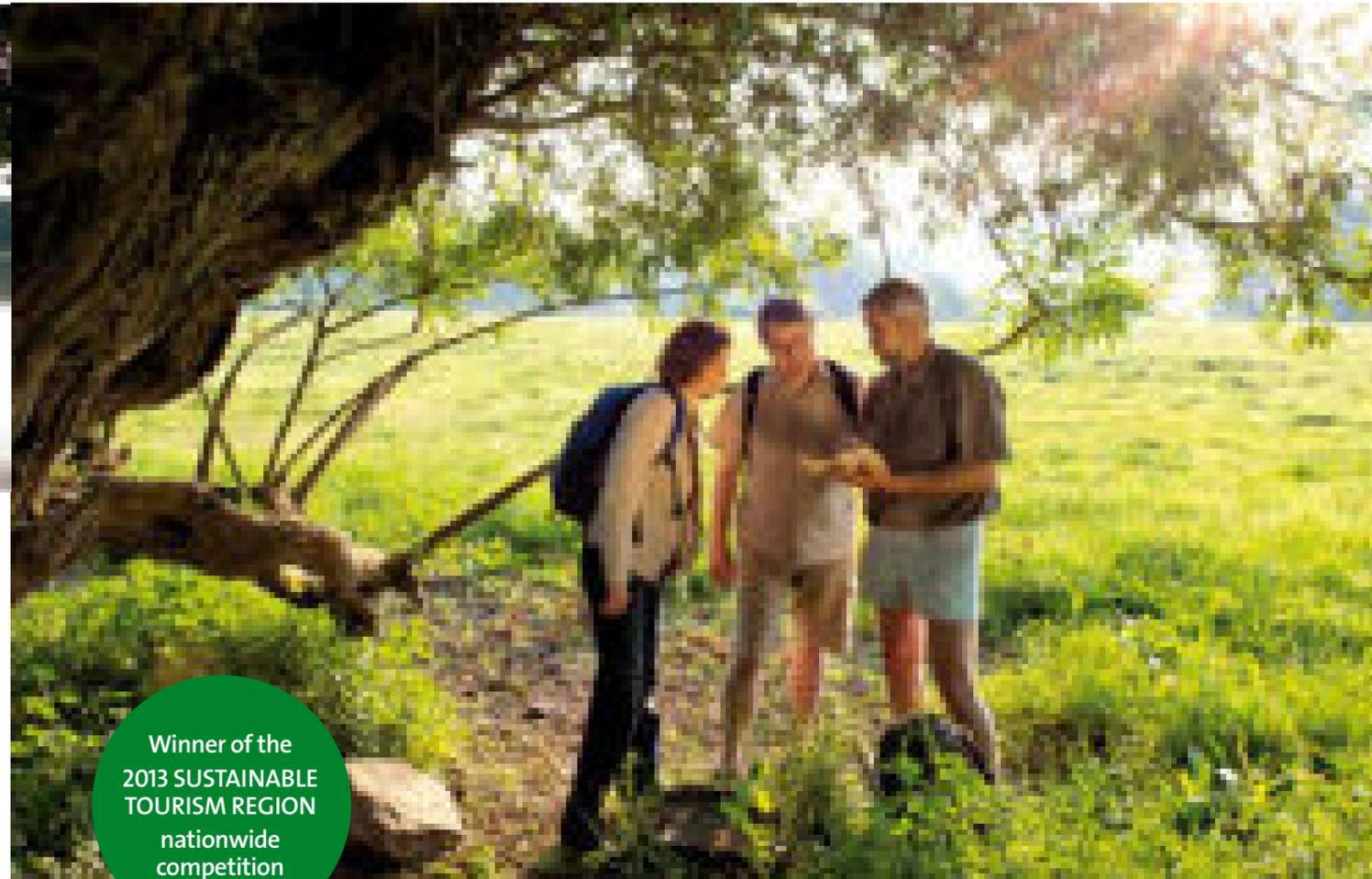
Between land and water When the glaciers of the last ice age thawed, they left behind more than 500 lakes, ponds, fens and streams. Today, around 60 per cent of this area is protected by nature and landscape conservation orders: to the west lies Uckermark Lakes Nature Park, bordered by the Havel river, to the east is Lower Oder Valley National Park and at the heart of it all is the Schorfheide-Chorin Biosphere Reserve. The people of Uckermark take pride in their unspoilt, unpretentious and authentic region. Protecting the environment has become part of the philosophy for many establishments here, and natural tourism is the goal. And as a tourist in the region, you can do your bit too – it's simple.

Walking: travel as nature intended The Märkischer Landweg Trail runs all the way through the Uckermark region. Covering 217 kilometres in ten sections, it crosses four protected landscapes from the Feldberg Lakes in Mecklenburg to the Oder river. Along the 170km Uckermärker Landrunde (Uckermark Country Loop), the scenery varies from shady oak forests to glistening lakes and medieval villages. Of the many established day routes for ambitious hikers and walkers, the Doppelte Boitzenburger (Double Boitzenburg) in the Uckermark region was voted Germany's most beautiful walking trail.

Poppies in the Lower Oder Valley | 1,735m town wall in Templin | Donkey walk in the Schorfheide-Chorin Biosphere Reserve



Biorama project in the Schorfheide-Chorin Biosphere Reserve



Winner of the
2013 SUSTAINABLE
TOURISM REGION
nationwide
competition

Walking along the Märkischer Landweg Trail

Let your eyes and ears guide you Regional nature guides can show you how to get even more out of the great outdoors. Walking experts know where the black woodpeckers, owls, pine martens, dormice and bats dwell. Experts on the water guide you to hidden spots by canoe or raft. And one particular expert brings along a special long-eared travel companion. Join her for donkey walks in the biosphere reserve.

Listed country houses given a new lease of life The collection of buildings on Gutshof Kraatz country estate have been converted into holiday homes using green building materials. The

cider brewed on site here uses old fruit varieties that have been rediscovered. Gutshaus Friedenfelde serves wholegrain cakes and other dishes (including allergen-free options) from a sustainably managed café set within its cosy parlour. Meanwhile, the Immenstube restaurant near Chorin Abbey prepares dishes using honey varieties sourced from its very own beehives.

Pioneers in green energy In Prenzlau the world's first ever hydrogen-hybrid power station is producing hydrogen from wind energy. This functions as an energy store that is used in a biogas generator to provide energy when the wind drops.

Highlights

- More than 1,000 kilometres of signposted walking trails, including several quality-certified routes
- Donkey walks, raft tours and hiking with expert insights from trained nature park guides
- Climate-friendly travel from Berlin train station on the hourly Uckermark Shuttle bus loop, complete with bike rack
- Ferien fürs Klima – Eco-friendly Holidays: places where you can holiday in the Uckermark with a small carbon footprint





The Elbe at Vietze

ALONG THE ELBE CYCLE ROUTE in the biosphere reserve with 'hay hotels', cyclestays, on-call buses and more.

A riverscape of culture The Elbe and its surrounding meadows form an extensive and varied riverscape all the way from the river's source in the Czech Republic to where it flows into the North Sea. The Lower Saxony Elbe Valley Biosphere Reserve and the Elbhöhen-Wendland Nature Park provide protection for an extraordinary biotope.

Here, where for decades the river separated East and West Germany, nature flourished within the seclusion of the former border zone. Today, this mix of richly diverse nature and recent history creates an unforgettable travel experience. Criss-crossed by the Elbe's tributaries, these marshland areas with their natural embankments and cut-off river branches form natural flood plains that protect the surrounding towns and villages. The ancient forests and heathland are home to species that are only found here, including the Elbe cocklebur plant, the Elbe true grass and the Elbe beaver.

Eco-education for the whole family With the help of a nature guide, kids have the chance to see storks in their nests, watch fish under the water and catch a glimpse of a beaver in its lodge. For a more hands-on activity, 'art in nature' invites children to create biodegradable artworks, such as faces in tree stumps or elaborate patterns made using natural materials like leaves, fruits and grasses. The eco-educational programme 'nature for the senses' provides a multi-sensory experience, in which you feel plants and other natural materials with your hands and feet, listen out for the sounds of the countryside, discover natural objects through smell and observe closely with your eyes.



Discover more at: www.germany.travel/naturally-elbtalae-wendland

Market square in Lüchow

Wendland: land of horses Man and horse at one with nature. Riding is a great way to get to know the region and its people – whether with the kids at the pony centre or taking a lesson in jumping, western or dressage. Go trekking or enjoy a leisurely ride in a covered wagon, and stop at various places en route to enjoy mouthwatering dishes made using local ingredients.

the artists at work: watch as sculptors carve out wood and blacksmiths hammer red-hot iron into shape. A former cowshed even provides the catwalk for a special fashion show.

Where customs live on Hardly a week goes by in the region without a huge celebration of some kind. There are the markets for the major religious holidays, the Heather Festival on Nemitz Heath, 'asparagus Sunday' in Lüchow, the solstice festival and the dragon-boat festival in Gartow, or the Vörgodendeelsdag in Schnega, a historical rye harvest festival.

A spring of culture in the Wendland region Between April and June, more than 600 artists and artisans showcase their work as part of the 'Wunde.r.punkte' season. Paintings and sculptures in former farmhouses, theatre and live music in disused barns, arts and crafts and organic food in old farmyards. Often you can see

Highlights

- **Medieval architecture** in the pretty little towns of Hitzacker, Dannenberg and Lüchow or the circular villages, and close up at the Rundlingsmuseum Wendlandhof in Lübeln
- **Green logging with the help of horses** – find out all the facts on a covered-wagon ride with the local horse logger
- **High-calibre music festivals** such as the Musikwoche festival and summer Musiktage in Hitzacker, the Gartow House concerts, the Lüchow organ festival and the Schubert festival in Schnackenburg
- **Walking and cycling:** you are always on the right track with 12 well-signposted, themed bike routes, 10 circular walks and many other cycle tracks and footpaths



Local history day in Hitzacker | Wunde.r.punkte – art in Görhde | Biosphaerium Elbtalae nature centre at Bleckede in Lower Saxony





Exploring Germany on two wheels

Cycling is good for you and for the environment – and it's great fun! With more than **200 long-distance bike routes** in Germany, cycling is a great way to see the sights and soak up the scenery. Serious cyclists can ride up the Alps, whereas those pedalling for pleasure may prefer the vineyards. For families, the varied routes along the rivers and coasts are ideal. And an **extensive cycle path network** makes pedalling around Germany's major cities a simple and safe option.

Discover the diversity that Destination Germany has to offer along more than **70,000 kilometres of cycle paths**.

Discover more at: www.germany.travel/cycling



Retracing the past There has always been something special about the Lippe region. It was here that the legendary Battle of Teutoburg Forest took place in 9 AD, when the Teutons, led by Hermann the Cheruscan, stopped the Romans' northern advance. The region still proudly refers to itself as 'Hermann's Teutoburg Forest'.

Externsteine rocks in the Teutoburg Forest | Schloss Holtfeld

→ Discover more at: www.germany.travel/naturally-teutoburg-forest



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Hermann monument on Grotenburg hill | Guided tour of Corvey Palace

The verdant wooded hills here serve as a green lung for the neighbouring Rhine-Ruhr conurbation, known for its heavy industry. The landscape is rich in natural medicinal resources, which have given rise to traditional spa resorts such as Bad Salzufflen and Bad Meinberg. The region has many reminders of its fascinating history: natural monuments such as the Externsteine fissured rocks dating back 70 million years, the Hermann the Cheruscan monument, palaces and castles from the 16th and 17th centuries and the historical towns of Detmold and Bad Salzufflen.

Germany's 'healing garden' The region's spa resorts combine the benefits of the mild yet bracing climate with salt water, mud, sulphur, and warm and cold healing waters. Today, these oases of wellbeing unite exercise, wellness, fitness and beauty facilities with a wealth of medical expertise – from the highly specialist German Heart Centre through to traditional Chinese medicine. Rest and recuperation for mind, body and soul. In Germany's healing garden you not only get to relax and unwind, but you also benefit from individually tailored therapies and health treatments. On special climate walks, you intentionally expose yourself to the invigorating effects of the wind and cold while getting some gentle exercise.

Walking: relax, get fit and clear your mind Some of Germany's best loved trails are situated around Hermannshöhe (Hermann's Rise), including the Hansaweg and the Panorama Trail.

The Eggeweg Trail on Prussian Velmerstot Hill



There is also a pilgrimage route called 'Time for the soul', inviting walkers to slow down and spend some time with their own thoughts. The route includes quiet places to stop and think – for an experience that's both relaxing and reflective.

Time to get pedalling Whether you prefer to cycle up and down the peaks in the Teutoburg Forest and Egge hills or pedal leisurely along field-covered valleys, the Hermann region has the ideal terrain and route for every cyclist. The area is also geared up for 'pedelecs'. Various electric-bike rental shops and charging points in the region enable cyclists of all abilities to enjoy the countryside on two wheels.

Teutoburg hospitality The hotels and restaurants of the Land-WIRTE initiative offer traditional Lippe hospitality in rural surroundings, serving regional dishes made from fresh ingredients. Idyllic farmhouses provide the perfect setting in which to enjoy a meal. Local favourites include Lippe potato soup, Lippe pork loin on broad beans, and baked apple.

A route dedicated to arts and crafts On the Kulturroute Kunsthandwerk, craftspeople reveal their day-to-day working life. When you visit these talented artisans in their studios and workshops, you'll learn what motivates them, find out which traditions they see themselves in, and discover how they work.

Highlights

- **Strate brewery in Detmold:** this family company, now in its fifth generation, won a prize for its green credentials
- **Actively upholding traditional customs:** the Schwalenberg/Lippe guild of historical costumes has been bringing history to life for 100 years
- **'Wellness Plus' Initiative:** 27 member organisations offer relaxation and selected cultural experiences
- **Plöger paper mill:** get an insight into working life at the mill and the traditional method of making paper by hand





Traditional punting trip

EXPLORE
A CULTURAL
LANDSCAPE
from the water on
traditional Spree
punts

Living life in the slow lane The Spree Forest: central Europe's most beautiful inland delta. Rivers and streams flow slowly between tranquil villages, where Sorbs still practise their age-old customs and boatmen guide their wooden punts along the narrow waterways at a leisurely pace.

→ Discover more at: www.germany.travel/naturally-spree-forest

Sunrise in the Spree Forest | Otter on the riverbank



Farmhouse | Washing the harvested Spree Forest gherkins the traditional way

Only an hour's drive south-east of Berlin lies an area with a very distinctive charm. After the last ice age, the Spree river was split into many branches forming a finely woven mesh of streams. Since the early Middle Ages, the landscape has been shaped by human hands, through forestry and farming. In the 18th century, farmers began to build canals, regulating the water level and creating a mosaic of fields, riverside woods, wetlands and waterways.

Drifting along The best way to discover the Spree Forest is in traditional fashion – on the water. Boat trips in Spree Forest punts depart from all the larger villages. Take a specially arranged tour themed around the season, discover the history and tradition of the local Sorbian people, or find out about the forest's flora and fauna from an expert guide. Or you can simply book a one- or two-hour round trip and enjoy some regional delicacies either on board or on dry land.

Mother Nature's larder The idea of the Spree Forest Biosphere Reserve, set up in 1990, was to promote traditional practices, and today around 70 per cent of the region's farmland is organic. The gherkins, horseradish and spirits enjoy commercial success far beyond the region – but, of course, only authentic Spree Forest produce is marked with the protected designation of origin logo.

Learning from nature Three visitor information centres offer families and groups of young people a fun way to learn more. 'A Place for People & Nature' in the historical quarter of Lübbenau reveals what the Spree Forest looked like in days gone by. In Burg,

the 'Applepearplumgherkinpumpkintree' exhibition presents the Spree Forest's diverse produce from the gherkin to the pike-perch. If you want to try cooking some of this local produce for yourself, the 'tree' has a selection of regional recipes for you to take home. The information centre in Schlepzig takes you under water without getting your feet wet. A Spree Forest punt glides overhead, aquatic plants float on the water's surface and predatory fish such as pike, pike-perch and eels as well as roach, tench and common rudd appear all around.

Access for all Over 90 accommodation and tourism providers in the Spree Forest offer facilities to meet the needs of people with restricted mobility. These include not only accessible hotels but also a place to hire handcycles. Even a traditional punt has been adapted to enable wheelchair users to enjoy an accompanied trip on the water in safety and comfort.

Highlights

- **Gherkin Cycle Trail:** 260km circular route (7 stages) starting in Lübben and taking in all the sights of the Spree Forest – includes tour and tasting at a gherkin pickling house
- **Excursions into the culture and traditions** of the Slavic people – the Sorbs and the Wends – with their elaborate costumes, their crafts and their customs
- **Winter's dream on water:** enjoy hot *glühwein* as you glide through the forest's waterways on a punt
- **Natural thermal salt-water** is harnessed at various wellbeing temples including the Spreewald Therme in Burg





The flavours of the seasons

Germany is a nation that likes to eat – and loves to cook! And nowhere is this done better than at our **274 Michelin-starred restaurants**.

It is above all the **seasonal produce**, served in modest restaurants and famous gourmet temples alike, that makes for a deliciously diverse dining experience. The cuisine changes with the seasons – and is always fresh.

Many cafés and restaurants source their ingredients from regional suppliers or even grow their own vegetables and herbs. Germany also has around 23,000 organic farms that provide sustainably grown produce and responsibly reared livestock.

The **festivals** held in honour of **traditional food and drink** are always a memorable experience, whether it's northern Germany's cabbage festival, the asparagus festival or the wine festivals celebrated across the 13 winegrowing regions.

Join the celebrations and enjoy German cooking where it's at its freshest – in Germany!

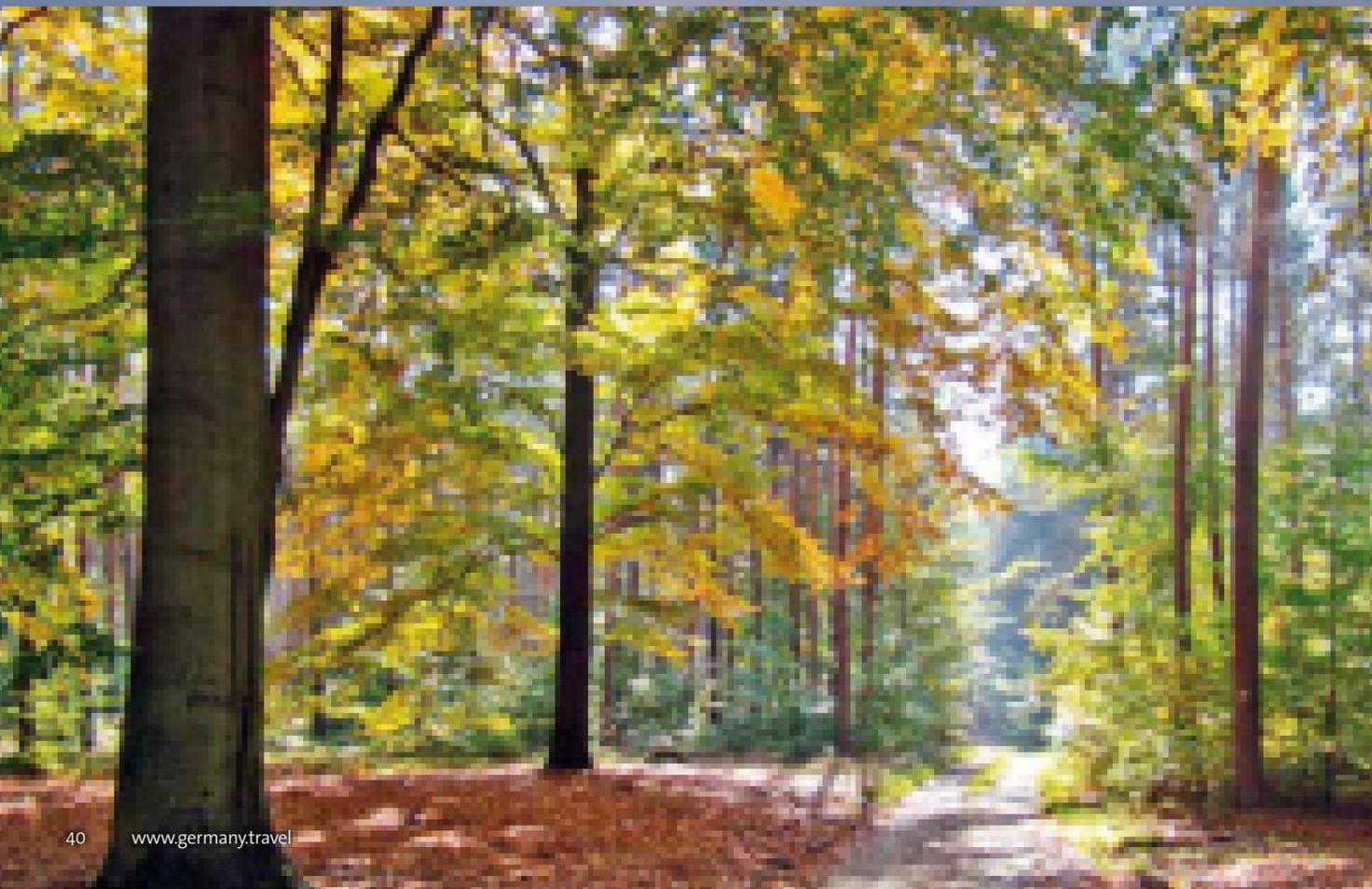
Discover more about food and drink in Germany at:
www.germany.travel/food-drink



New horizons in historical surroundings The Middle Elbe Valley and Düben Heath, together with the surrounding towns of Dessau, Wörlitz, Lutherstadt Wittenberg and Torgau, can look back over a long and fascinating history. Conservation has not always been a priority here, least of all during the age of industrialisation. Today, however, a range of initiatives are bringing sustainable experiences to this historical setting, preserving it for future generations.

Middle Elbe Biosphere Reserve – paddling along the Elbe near Wittenberg | Autumnal idyll on Düben Heath

RURAL RETREAT
with a
rich history



Discover more at: www.germany.travel/naturally-dueben-heath

Moments of history 500 years ago in Wittenberg, Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church, heralding the Reformation that took hold of, and transformed, the whole of Europe. The Age of Enlightenment is reflected in the accomplished symphony of nature, landscape design and architecture that you as a visitor will witness today in the Garden Kingdom of Dessau-Wörlitz. Also ahead of its time was the Bauhaus School, whose legacy is still widely preserved and respected to this day.

Amazing flora and fauna Amidst these historical sites, nestled within the natural riverscape of the Elbe and the Mulde, lies Düben Heath Nature Park, home to the largest mixed forest in central Germany and to meadows, stream-covered lowlands, pretty little reservoirs and heathland villages. You might also spot cranes, white-tailed eagles and other rare birds here. The park's most famous inhabitant (and its logo), the beaver, was nearing extinction by the mid-20th century, with only a small number remaining. Thanks to strict conservation measures, however, the population is slowly recovering. Today, roughly 800 beavers live in the Düben Heath Nature Park and in the Middle Elbe Biosphere Reserve, which became part of the UNESCO-accredited Elbe Riverside Biosphere Reserve in 1997.

Health on the heath Bad Schmiedberg and Bad Düben have both enjoyed long traditions as spa resorts. For more than 100 years, orthopaedic, rheumatic and gynaecological conditions have been successfully treated here using the moor peat from Düben Heath.

The range of therapies also includes naturopathic treatments, fasting and Kneipp hydrotherapy. The Health Academy offers courses and workshops on naturopathy, herbal remedies and homoeopathy.

Breathing new life into endangered habitats Open-cast lignite mines, closed in the late 1980s, left deep scars in the landscape. Today, however, Goitzsche country park near Bitterfeld is a model example of sustainable environmental restoration. The former mines here were flooded to create four lakes as part of a landscape design project. You can now stroll along the water's edge, past the marina and the beach, and on to Bitterfeld harbour.

Sail straight out of the water sports centre and into the wind or take a leisurely tour on a pedalo. Nordic Aktiv Park offers a selection of Nordic walking and rollerblading routes covering around 100 kilometres.

Highlights

- **Düben Heath Museum Village:** crafts, culture and environmental education in the historical watermill, reconstructed in 2006
- **Heide Spa:** award-winning spa retreat with a commitment to sustainability
- **Nature reserve centre in Bad Düben** with wide-ranging activities for all the family, such as the quality-certified Heath Beaver Trail and guided wildlife tours
- **Food and drink made from locally sourced ingredients is sold under the 'Bestes aus der Dübener Heide' label** Try beer, fruit wine, ham, sheep's cheese, pumpernickel or heath honey at various farms on the heath.



Above: Luther monument in Wittenberg | The Elbe in Torgau | Historical fashion show at Düben Heath Museum Village





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→ Discover more at: www.germany.travel/naturally-werra-valley

The Werra Valley

Walking, cycling and canoeing along the Green Belt

The Werra river snakes its way for 300 kilometres from its source on the Rennsteig ridge through Thuringia, northern Hessen and southern Lower Saxony – often alongside the former inner-German border. At Hannoversch Münden, the Werra and Fulda merge to become the Weser river.

Northern Hessen is blessed with picturesque, fairytale-like scenery. Idyllic little towns and villages of timber-framed houses line the valley, while medieval castles tower high from the hilltops, standing watch over the region's legends. It was here that the Brothers Grimm – compilers of the famous collection of German fairytales – gathered their folk stories. One of their best-known characters, Mother Hulda, is said to have lived on Hoher Meissner hill.

Today, the region tells a modern tale of carbon-neutral energy and fresh countryside air. Opportunities for hiking, cycling, canoeing or horse riding open up a world of discoveries in Werra-Meissen.

Green discovery tour In Meissner-Kaufungen Forest Nature Park, the carefully routed walking trails ensure minimal environmental impact. The various quality-certified routes can be combined

in such a way that you can enjoy a richly varied walking holiday without having to change accommodation or transfer luggage. For expertise and insights, you can also book a nature park guide to accompany you.

Canoeing from Wanfried down to Hannoversch Münden is an option even for novices. The slow current means beginners can familiarise themselves with the boat and the river at their own pace. From the water, you get a truly unique perspective of the region.

Cycling is a particularly fine way to explore the area here. On the Werra Valley Cycle Route from the Rennsteig to the Weser, you can cover a good 300 kilometres in just under a week – with overnight accommodation and transfers organised, of course.

All tours provide ample time to enjoy a taste of regional cuisine. Local producers and restaurants entice adventurers with delicious specialities like Ahle Worscht sausage, Meissen lamb and Ringgau cheese. For the full flavour, you can combine your rest stop with behind-the-scenes tours and tastings.

Contemporary history brought to life It was here – in the geographical centre of Europe – that the border between East and West split the landscape in two. Amid the seclusion afforded by the former 'death strip', a refuge for endangered flora and fauna emerged. Today, the Green Belt reunites this culturally important region. Carefully preserved sites of remembrance, such as the underground Stasi tunnel in Wendehausen and the Heldrastein Tower of Unity, document this period of history. Schiffersgrund Border Museum provides extensive insights with its array of exhibits.



Highlights

- **Bad Sooden-Allendorf:** salt-evaporation works, thermal baths, sauna complex and Dead Sea salt grotto
- **'Rebbes' barrier-free marked trail on Hoher Meissner hill:** suitable for wheelchairs and pushchairs
- **Energy-efficient refurbishment** of restaurants and cafés in partnership with power companies
- **Specially prepared winter trails for walking, cross-country skiing and skating,** starting from Frau Holle cross-country skiing car park on Hoher Meissner hill

Walking in the woods at Hannoversch Münden



Berlepsch Castle | Eschwege old town





Time travel at 38 UNESCO heritage sites

Only very few countries can match Germany's **38 UNESCO World Heritage sites**, which mark it out as a veritable treasure trove of human and natural history. Each and every one of these sites is deemed to be of outstanding universal value – and is protected for future generations by detailed conservation plans. Collectively, they represent culture and nature in all facets and in breathtaking beauty.

Stroll through the well-preserved **old quarters**, wander through the **parks and natural landscapes**, and admire the creative force of mankind – from centuries-old **abbeys, churches, palaces and castles** to modern **marvels of industry**. Discover extraordinary historical testaments to **culture and religion** and be inspired by pioneering **architecture and design**.

In short, take a magical journey through time!

Discover more at: www.germany.travel/unesco

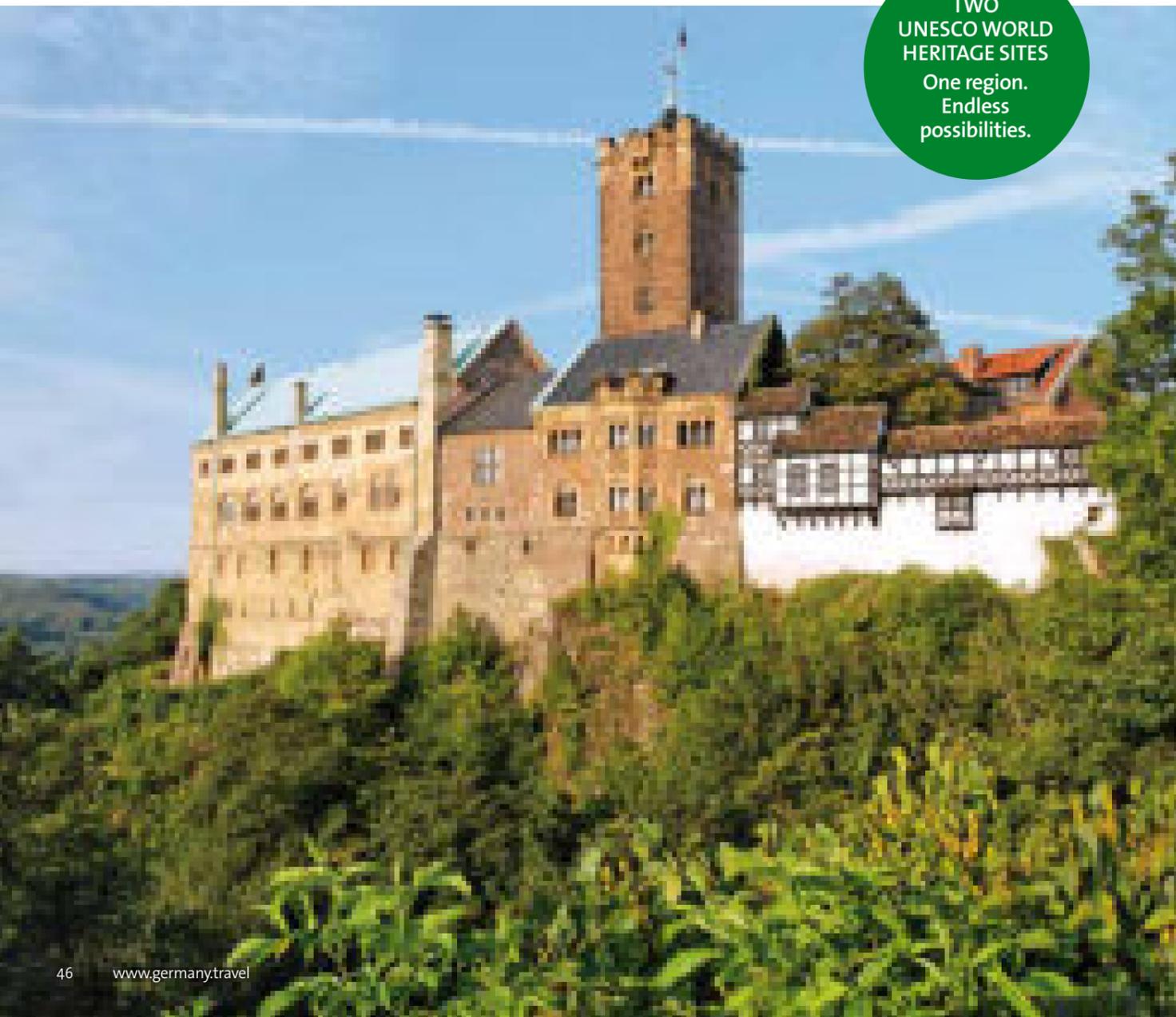


A rich heritage The World Heritage region of Wartburg Hainich combines two of Thuringia's most significant tourist destinations: historical Wartburg Castle and the ancient beech forests, which not only reflect the two sides to the UNESCO coin – culture and nature – but also offer a world of opportunities for visitors now and in the future.

From the Middle Ages onwards, the famous Wartburg Castle regularly appears in the annals of German history. Immortalised by Richard Wagner's Tannhäuser opera, this is where Saint Elisabeth lived and worked, and where Martin Luther took refuge and started his German translation of the Bible. These fortifications, visible from far and wide, also came to be a symbol of German unity.

Between culture and nature In the neighbouring Hainich National Park – the largest expanse of unmanaged deciduous woodland in Germany – nature has been left to its own devices. The largely unspoilt beech forest is home to an unparalleled range of species. The forest floor is a thick carpet of spring snowflakes, liverleaf, wood anemone, orchids and wild garlic. There are also

Wartburg Castle near Eisenach



TWO UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES
One region.
Endless possibilities.



Wildcat at Hütscheroda Wildcat Village | Hainich National Park Centre



woodpeckers, bats and over 2,100 types of beetle to be seen here. You are unlikely to catch a glimpse of Hainich's indigenous wildcat (the region's emblem) as it roams the forest, but you can observe these timid creatures in naturalistic enclosures at Hütscheroda wildcat village. A large interactive exhibition inside the wildcat centre tells you all about the animals. The seven-kilometre wildcat trail around the village combines spectacular views with unconventional art on the wayside.

Low-impact tourism Thiemsburg National Park Centre, the largest and most visited environmental education centre in Thuringia, is dedicated to developing sustainable tourism. It is also the site of the spectacular Hainich treetop trail, which combines nature with art, education and play at dizzying heights. Thanks to the purpose-built lift, wheelchair users and parents with pushchairs can reach the treetop trail and Brunstal adventure trail for a view of Wartburg Castle in the distance.

Regional food and drink all year round The fruit and vegetables grown on the farms around Hainich National Park are

renowned for their quality. Throughout the year, gourmet festivals celebrating typical regional specialities offer an enticing blend of nature and culture. Similarly, you can combine a walk through the colourful autumnal forest with a cultural excursion in the footsteps of Bach and Luther, or follow a trip to the medieval Christmas market at Wartburg Castle with a wintry walk through ancient woodland.

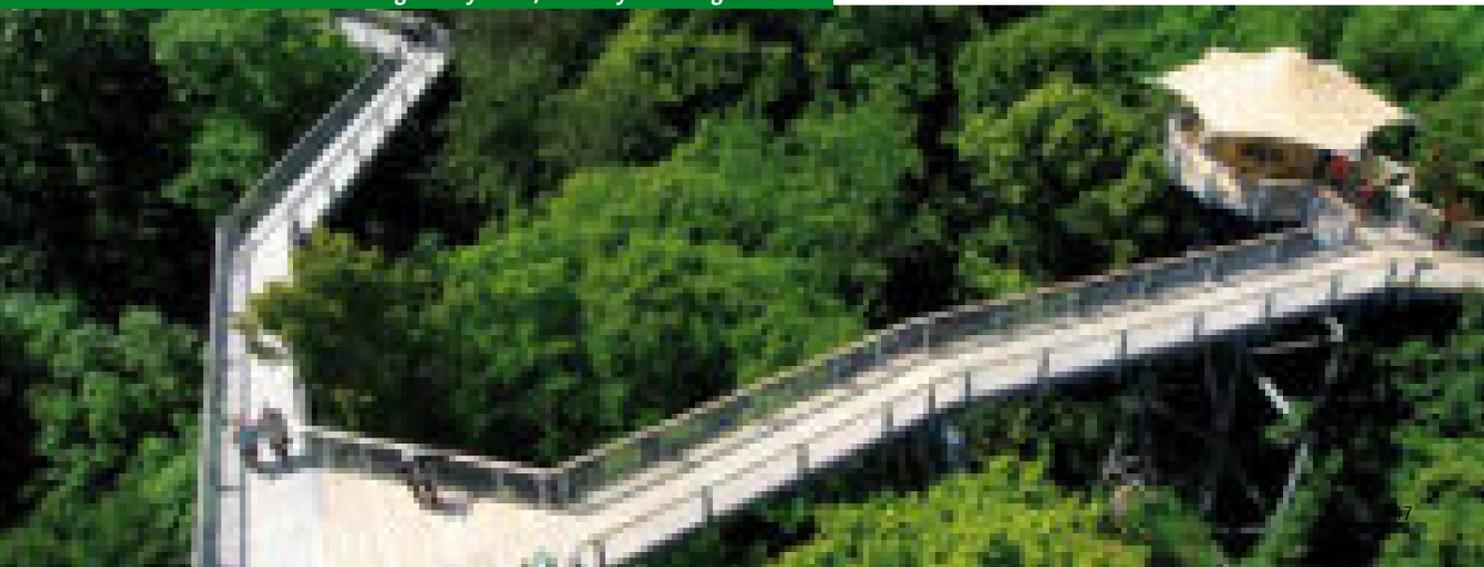


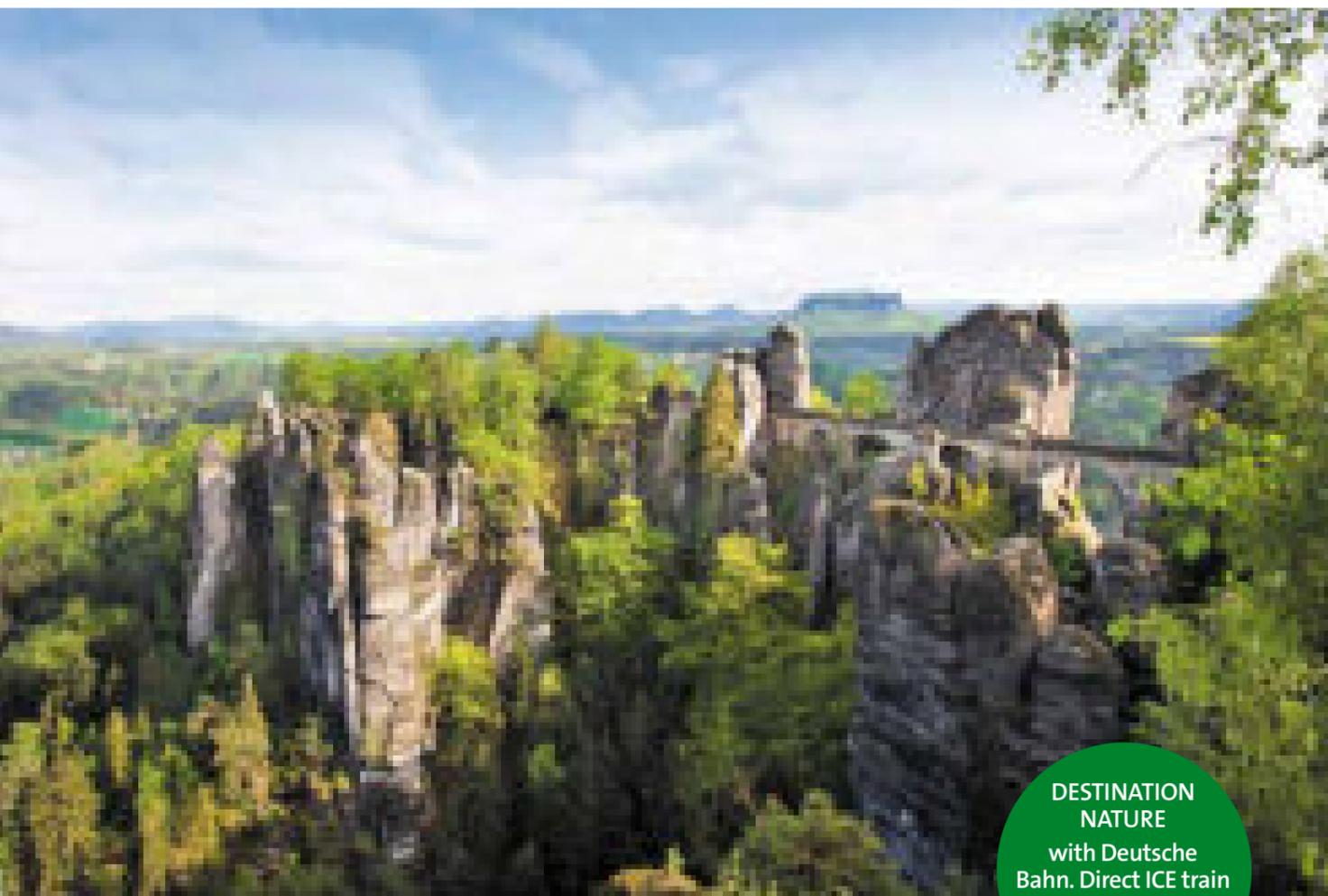
Highlights

- **The Green Belt** along the old border between East and West Germany: formerly the 'death strip', now a rich habitat
- **Spa resort and 'rose town' of Bad Langensalza:** take a stroll in the spa gardens and ten other gardens and parks
- **Thermal baths, spas and saunas:** Friederiken Therme in Bad Langensalza, Aquaplex in Eisenach, Thüringen Therme in Mühlhausen
- **Travel on the "Wunderbarer Wanderbus"** walkers' bus between Wartburg Castle and the national park and get free entry to the treetop trail

→ Discover more at: www.germany.travel/naturally-wartburg-hainich

Treetop trail in Hainich National Park





The Bastei rocks

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The rocks of the Romantics Just a short train ride south from Dresden, on the border with the Czech Republic, a landscape of craggy rocks, deep ravines and mysterious lakes awaits walkers. Painters, musicians, poets and philosophers of the Romantic period used to tour Saxon Switzerland and found much inspiration here.

Access-for-all through the Elbe Sandstone Massif | Königstein Fortress



Freeclimbing in Saxon Switzerland | Felsenbühne Rathen

→ Discover more at: www.germany.travel/naturally-saxon-switzerland

Today, this unparalleled landscape is increasingly catching the attention of Hollywood. Directors regularly bring international film stars to the region to shoot scenes for major productions amidst the pristine scenery. Filming is only permitted if it is compatible with local nature conservation and the recreational needs of holidaymakers.

On the trail of the Romantics This rocky national park is today considered one of Europe's most spectacular regions for walking. The Malerweg (Painters' Way), for example, will guide you through 112 kilometres of enchanting, ever-changing scenery. More than 70 accommodation providers certified as 'Walker-friendly on the Malerweg' are geared up for visitors following the trail, and offer one-night stays, packed lunches and help with luggage transfers. Windproof clothes, warm gloves, a hat and non-slip shoes – with these, hiking here is a joy at any time of year!

Cyclists following the Elbe Cycle Route pass through the Saxon Switzerland region near Dresden – a good reason to hop off the saddle and scale one of the *via ferrata* climbing trails.

In the motherland of freeclimbing The porous sandstone rocks, which give the landscape here its distinctive charm, are especially sensitive to the effects of weather. Because local climbers want to pursue their passion for many years to come, they have formulated a set of strict rules for climbing in the region that takes this sensitive landscape into account: for example, it is expressly forbidden to use metal safety equipment such as nuts or spring-loaded camming devices on the more than 1,100 designated free-standing climbing summits here. Ropes and anchors (e.g. rings) may only be used as a safety measure, not for actively climbing.

Felsenbühne Rathen: drama in the rocks Amidst this sea of rocks lies one of Europe's most spectacular outdoor theatres - Felsenbühne Rathen. It was on this site that Carl-Maria von Weber found inspiration for several scenes of his *Freischütz*. Today, this opera is performed annually here in its original setting. Things take a less musical turn but stay just as atmospheric when the heroes of Karl May's westerns, Old Shatterhand and Winnetou, gallop across the stage to save the day.

Access-for-all in Saxon Switzerland Saxon Switzerland meets the needs of travellers with disabilities: at the National Park Centre, for example, specially tailored guided tours of the interactive exhibition are available for visitors with visual impairments and hearing loss. And where else can you go on tours of the national park with a ranger in a wheelchair?

Highlights

- **VVO (Upper Elbe public transport network):** one ticket for local trains, buses and ferries – including the FahrradBus for bikes, and the WanderBus for walkers
- **The vintage buses and trains of Sächsisch-Böhmischer Nationalpark-Express** serve the region's most popular destinations, such as the Bastei rocks and Königstein Fortress
- Find a new perspective **with courses in landscape photography**
- **Terrain cures:** on a *terrainskur* you walk in microclimates that are specially chosen for their therapeutic benefits. Dedicated climate therapy trails are located in Bad Gottleuba health park and in the spa resorts of Gohrisch and Rathen.





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Weinfeld maar near Daun in the Volcanic Eifel

Tomorrow's ancient woodland Rising up from beyond the Rhine and Moselle rivers, near Germany's border with Belgium and Luxembourg, is the Eifel: a landscape of dark green wooded hills, bizarre crags and wild streams cutting through deep valleys. Though the mountains here no longer spit fire, the Eifel region is still volcanically active in geological terms.

Black storks, eagle owls and wildcats are just some of the 1,400-plus endangered animal and plant species found in the Eifel National Park. Walkers, cyclists and horseriders all have dedicated paths here. The flow of visitors is carefully managed to ensure that nature can develop unhindered and is not compromised by the interests of tourists. Just a short distance from the city of Cologne, woodland, water and wilderness have reclaimed their natural cycle of creation and decay.

The good life – quality-certified produce The Eifel quality marque, one of the first such certifications in Germany, has united local businesses in the timber, food and tourism industries

since 2004. Wherever you see the logo – a yellow 'e' superimposed on four coloured blocks – you can expect high-quality products and services that are Eifel through and through. Wine from the Ahr valley, water filtered through volcanic rock, premium ham and sausage specialities, breads, eggs, milk and honey all capture the taste of nature. You'll also be pleased to hear that most of the produce used in Eifel restaurants is locally sourced.

Spirituality for all Explore the Eifel, and find inner peace, walking along the Creation Path near Simmerath-Hirschrott. Boards with excerpts from the Bible as well as secular texts guide you on your way and offer a spiritual view of nature. Contemplation is also



→ Discover more at: www.germany.travel/naturally-eifel

Hikers on the Eifelsteig Trail

writ large at Maria Laach Abbey: in the conservation area surrounding the Laach crater lake, you can go hiking in the pure air, clear your head, relax with a massage, enjoy the comforts of the Maria Laach lakeside hotel and embrace everything nature has given you.

Barrier-free nature The disabled-friendly Wilder Kermeter nature reserve welcomes visitors with restricted mobility and sensory impairments. The paths to the Hirschley viewpoint, for example, are suitable for wheelchairs and wheel walkers. Blind and

visually impaired visitors are also able to access nature thanks to a special guidance system that covers the entire reserve, and information boards in raised lettering and Braille. People with hearing loss can book guided tours in German sign language. National park rangers and expert forest guides have been specially trained to ensure all visitors enjoy an unrestricted experience of nature.

Highlights

- **More than 500 tours** led by expert forest guides attract over 10,000 visitors a year
- **National park rangers** who are specially trained in German sign language
- **Separate paths** for walkers, cyclists and horse riders
- **Getting back to nature:** seldom-used paved roads in the conservation area are being removed and power cables are being routed underground



Enjoying quality Eifel produce | Disabled-friendly trail in the northern Eifel | Maria Laach lakeside hotel, with the abbey in the background





Barrier-free Germany

For people with restricted levels of mobility and activity, whether intermittent or permanent, Destination Germany presents a wide range of possibilities for a relaxing holiday or successful business trip. These opportunities cover a broad group of travellers, from **families with small children** and **older travellers** to **people with physical and mental disabilities**.

The available facilities and amenities are equally broad in scope and range from **wheelchair-accessible accommodation** to local and intercity transport with **assisted entry and exit**, from cultural events featuring **audio description** to **sign language interpreters**, and **menus tailored to special dietary requirements**.

Welcome to Destination Germany!

Discover more about barrier-free tourism in Germany at: www.germany.travel/tourismforall



Land of orchids and savoir-vivre

Orchards sweeping far and wide, flower-filled grasslands, sprawling beech forests and – at the heart of it all – the Blies winding through riverbank meadows. The UNESCO Biosphere Reserve of Bliesgau in the south-east of the Saarland nestles between the northern Vosges mountains of France and the Palatinate Forest.

In a region characterised by a thousand years of human culture, nature has survived intact. The Bliesgau is a haven for rare species of flora and fauna, such as the little owl and the red kite, the lizard orchid and the rattle plant. Countless varieties of orchid thrive in the meadows, and on the riverbanks you can see signs of the beavers that repopulated the area in the 1990s. The oldest settle-

ment here can be traced back all the way to Celtic-Roman times. The rest of the region's colourful history is shaped by the French. Though the landscape is mainly characterised by agriculture and fruit farming, the skyline to the north is defined by remnants of industrial heritage.

The Bliesgau Biosphere Reserve by bike | Cuesta landscape in full bloom

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CARTE LOISIRS**
for free admission
at more than 200
attractions, plus free
bus and rail travel in
the Saarland!



Have fun and have a go When it comes to discovering the very essence of the biosphere, there's a hands-on activity for everyone – including the chance to swing a scythe like the farmers of old. The Bliesgau is renowned for its fruit farming, so it comes as no surprise that the apple juice served in its restaurants comes from local meadow orchards. You too can help with harvesting – as part of an 'orchards of culture' activity holiday – where you'll learn about the important role of meadow orchards in the balance of nature.

Exploring nature with expert guides Around 40 certified nature guides from the Bliesgau region have teamed up to show visitors all that their region has to offer. In the company of a pro, you can live and breathe nature, follow St James' Pilgrimage Way and amble through the countryside with donkeys. Join an artist guide and set free your inner poet or create innovative artworks inspired by nature at the LandART workshop.

'The raft of sustainability' This experience – which draws on the centuries-old Saarland tradition of wooden rafts and forestry – combines a sustainable activity with environmental but also social aspects, as you can undertake the project together with friends, colleagues and family. Guided by the local forester, you learn how to work with timber, felling spruces, turning them into a raft and setting out on a 'great journey'. To offset the harvested wood, you plant young beech trees, which are native to the Bliesgau region, thereby making another valuable contribution to essential forestry work.

Agriculture plays a major role in the conservation and management of this cultivated landscape. It is also responsible for the Bliesgau's many fields of orchids. The 32-hectare expanse of orchids near Gersheim presents nature lovers with half of all orchid varieties found in Germany.

DIY rafts on the Niederwürzbacher Weiher lake | Owl chick on Mount Kreuzberg | Above: orchid meadow near Gersheim



Discover more at: www.germany.travel/naturally-bliesgau

The e-bike experience With the eVelo package, you get an e-bike and a full set of accessories, giving you the benefit of carbon-neutral electric assistance as you ride right across the region on a two-day tour. The deal includes two nights' accommodation and typical regional meals, with views of the Bliesgau's valleys and the Vosges mountains as an added bonus. Thanks to the Saarland's tightly woven network of clearly signposted footpaths, the Bliesgau region is also easy to explore on foot.

The Bliesgau also has many well-signposted trails.



Highlights

- **You don't have to go far to experience nature's great pleasures!** This is the motto of the Bliesgau Genuss association, which promotes locally made food on behalf of its members
- **EUROPARC project 'volunteers in parks'** invites visitors to take part in project-based conservation work
- **Typical regional dishes** such as *dibbelabbes*, dumplings and Bliesgau lamb
- **Rock-climbing courses for children and adults** in Kirkel Forest





Black Forest farmhouse

FREE TRAVEL
on buses and trains
throughout the
Black Forest with the
KONUS CARD



Lake Schluchsee

→ Discover more at: www.germany.travel/naturally-black-forest

Today, the region is the standard-bearer for sustainable tourism – from transport and eco-certified accommodation through to the use of renewable energies.

On track for sustainability Train travel with Deutsche Bahn is the eco-friendly way to travel to the Black Forest. And any of 10,000 accommodation providers will provide holidaymakers with a Konus card: a visitor ticket and travel card rolled into one, valid on all local public bus and train services in a region spanning 11,000 square kilometres.

Free spirits may opt for an e-bike, with more than 200 hire shops and charging points across the region offering electromobility. In Königfeld, Germany's first 'solar commune', you can even charge electric vehicles for free or hire electric mopeds for low-noise, zero-emission touring.

Active and healthy The untamed landscape of rugged mountains and deep gorges is a mecca for walkers and mountain bikers, and ever since the days of the Celts and the Alemanni, the

rolling hills of the Upper Rhine have been prized for their sunny climate. It was the Romans who brought winegrowing and thermal baths to the region. Discover this exceptional landscape with all your senses and get to know the people and their customs. In winter you can go skiing, snow-shoeing and ice-skating or go climbing in frozen waterfalls. But you don't have to brave the snow to enjoy a natural health boost in the Black Forest – the region's hot springs are known for their healing powers.

Regional cuisine in a class of its own Whether in an exclusive restaurant or a cosy village inn, you'll discover that life here tastes good. Traditional hospitality, local produce and an appreciation of regional, seasonal food find their greatest expression in the dark, full-flavoured ham, crusty bread and the famous Black Forest gateau. And then there are the Baden wines: vines flourish in the farming and winegrowing villages of the Markgräflerland, Kaiserstuhl and Tuniberg regions, as well as in Breisgau and Ortenau, producing authentic wines that are enjoyed by connoisseurs the world over.

Adventure awaits behind every pine The Black Forest: home of the world-famous cuckoo clocks, the red pom-pom hats, the iconic farmhouses and the legendary gateau. It is a place where traditional crafts like clockmaking and customs such as the Alemannic fasnacht carnival are cherished. In 1937 the area around the Feldberg (the highest peak in Germany that doesn't count as a true mountain) became the first conservation reserve in Baden-Württemberg.

Freiburg – View of the Swabian gate | Schwarzwaldstube | Traditional Black Forest gateau



Freiburg, the 'green city'

Highlights

- **Germany's highest uplands:** 70 peaks in excess of 1,000m
- **Year-round appeal:** 24,000 kilometres of footpaths, exposed trails for road bikes and mountain bikes, panoramic cycle routes for leisurely rides, 200 ski lifts and 2,000 kilometres of cross-country ski tracks
- **Eat well, eat locally:** 26 gourmet restaurants with a total of 33 Michelin stars, over 90 nature park restaurants serving excellent dishes made using regional ingredients
- **Outdoor activities for people with disabilities:** barrier-free discovery tours with three-wheeler e-bikes



Wilderness on your doorstep In Germany's oldest national park, Mother Nature is reclaiming her territory. The forest wilderness that is taking shape here is largely left to its own devices – set within the carefully managed landscape of the nature park. It is here that you'll find the Grosser Arber: the highest (at 1,456 metres) and best known of the Bavarian Forest mountains.

The 'Tierisch wild' project in the Bavarian Forest National Park gives you access to nature-friendly activities in this unspoilt landscape in the border triangle of Bavaria, the Czech Republic and Austria, which – together with the adjoining Bohemian Forest national park – forms the largest area of protected forest in Europe.

Wild animals at close quarters The national park centres feature spacious enclosures that faithfully recreate the natural habitat of the indigenous species, who spend their days doing what comes naturally to them – running, climbing, swimming, eating, sleeping or simply hiding away. Here, you can get up close to animals that you perhaps wouldn't want to meet in the wild, including

Walking in the Bavarian Forest

→ Discover more at: www.germany.travel/naturally-bavarian-forest



The Bavarian Forest in winter

STANDOUT TRAVEL CONCEPT:
free travel for visitors with the National Park CARD and the GuTi eco-ticket

aurochs, bison and even wild horses. These mighty hoofed animals, which were indigenous to the area during the ice ages, can be seen from the visitor trail at Falkenstein National Park Centre. Its path leads to a dark, rocky cave with replica cave paintings depicting wild animals in true-to-life form. The Stone Age brought to life.

High above the forest floor you can enjoy nature in its purest form as well as unparalleled views – thanks to the world's longest treetop path, at Lusen National Park Centre. A lift in the entry tower means older visitors, wheelchair users and parents with pushchairs can also get up amongst the treetops. The 1.3km boardwalk gives you an authentic experience of the forest from a totally new perspective. It ends at a platform on the viewing tower, 44 metres above the ground, where the views are simply glorious.

Helping out with conservation Activity weeks in the Bavarian Forest National Park are a chance for you to experience the dynamic of the woods when they're left to nature's own devices. On guided walks, you'll learn that you're not only able to observe nature, you can also make use of it – particularly when it comes to the herbs: you first of all gather the wild herbs by the banks of the stream and then mix them together to make medicinal remedies and oils. The mountain pastures of Grosser

Arber provide a precious habitat to highly endangered plant species such as Hungarian gentian and clubmoss. To ensure these species continue to thrive, the pastures must periodically be tended to, which includes cutting back bilberry bushes. It's an opportunity to put what you've learned into practice, while also giving nature a helping hand.

Highlights

- **Traditional crafts** on show at the glassworks, and with the glassblower's help you can have a go yourself at Rotwald-glashütte in Zwiesel
- **National Park partners and walker-friendly hosts:** tourism companies that are certified for sustainability display the national park logo and the 'Ge(h)nuss' logo of a winged walking boot
- **Wildlife celebrations:** from the family-friendly 'woodpecker festival' in Spiegelau to the more culinary-focused venison festival in Sankt Oswald-Riedlhütte in autumn
- **Low-impact winter sports:** snow-shoeing trails and a network of long-distance tracks for cross-country skiers (classic and skate-skiing) in the areas around Straubing, Passau, Deggendorf and in the border region



The tree-tower, standing 44 metres, at the end of the treetop path | Mountain-biking in the Bavarian Forest





ALLGÄU-WALSER CARD
with 130 partners incl. cable cars (summer/winter), thermals baths and spas, leisure and transport services

Allgäu Alps

Allgäu – a natural high From the rolling foothills of the Alps all the way up to the mountain peaks, the Allgäu has always attracted active holidaymakers. As a sustainable destination for health and wellness, the region is aiming for more, and its Allgäu brand logo can only be used once a strict set of sustainability criteria has been met.

The Allgäu High Alps conservation area is the most bio-diverse mountain range anywhere in Germany. It is home to over 70 endangered plant species as well as 40 types of orchid, including the lady slipper (the largest wild orchid in the Alps), and the carnivorous sundew. Sustainable tourism is already an everyday reality here: almost all holiday destinations are easily reached without a car, and many tourist cards even include public transport at no extra cost. On arrival, of course, it's best to use more active means of travel.

Scramble up to dizzying heights and glide back down The cycle routes across the Alps are mountain bike heaven. Some of the most popular trails start in the Allgäu. The Radrunde Allgäu cycle loop takes in the most beautiful spots on a 450km multi-stage cycling tour of the Allgäu and tells the story of the landscape's past. Fifty train stations along the route offer full

flexibility and cyclists can choose a stage with an altitude profile that's right for them. If that sounds too strenuous, you can ride an eco-friendly e-bike, a pedelec or even a disabled-friendly three-wheeler. You can charge up the batteries at the Richtersalp inn, for example, where they generate the required power from a small hydroelectric plant.

Fresh from the farm The goodness of the grass and plants that thrive on the mountain pastures around Bad Hindelang lives on in the milk produced by the Braunvieh cows of Allgäu. This milk is turned into premium mountain cheese – sometimes right there on the farm or at the Alpine dairies. Fourteen local restaurants that serve food sourced fresh from the farm have teamed up under the label of 'regional cuisine – this is how Bad Hindelang cooks'.

Expedition Nagelfluh Nagelfluhkette Nature Park has set up a special family-friendly, interactive exhibition in Immenstadt. Children can also take part in 'junior ranger training' where they'll learn how the cycle of nature works, while parents get to taste the different flavours of regional cuisine from Landzunge, Mundart and other culinary associations.

A working holiday with a twist One place you can walk to, and where you'll discover a special business model, is the Alpe Sonnhalde alpine farm collective in the Mittelbach valley near Oberstaufen: its special fund, where interest is at times quite literally paid in cheese, is helping to finance the farm and meet the Demeter standards for organic farming. Instead of earning interest, investors receive payment in kind. Working holidays even for several months are available on the mountain pastures.

A time to celebrate: bonfires, carnivals and cattle drives ... Enjoy traditional Allgäu customs – all year round. A highlight is the mountain cattle drive. This special public holiday at the end of a long alpine summer is known by the locals in the Allgäu and Kleinwalsertal valley as *Viehscheid* – and makes for an

unforgettable holiday experience. Each September more than 30,000 cows from Oberstaufen to Pfronten are taken from the Alps back down to their shelters in the valley, with the 'lead cow' given a beautiful garland. A working day for the herdsmen, and a holiday for every town and village – one with much celebration.



Highlights

- **Public transport specials** include the Königscard, Bad Hindelang PLUS, Oberstaufen PLUS and Destination Nature
- **Courses and day trips** in the green energy village of Wilpoldsried and at the Allgäu High Alps branch of the LBV bird conservation association
- **Courses for woodland owners** and those with an interest in sustainable forestry
- **Alpine wellness** in the Allgäu offers something for everyone: holistic treatments for holidaymakers or special programmes such as music meditation in an abbey with natural remedies including mud, water and hay
- **Hindelang PLUS:** includes bus and cable car services in summer, and ski pass in winter

The cattle drive in Oberstaufen



Discover more at: www.germany.travel/naturally-allgaeu

The Wannenkopfhütte chalet | Cycling in the Allgäu

Quality time Time is the key to the Ammergau Alps. Those who holiday here gain a new sense of it. Whether that's taking time out for yourself or for exercise, pleasure or peace and quiet. Time for living. Time to recharge those batteries.

Oberammergau, carpeted in snow | Lüftl paintings (traditional murals) in Oberammergau

THE GREAT OUTDOORS FOR ALL
Marked trails for wheelchairs, hand bikes and wheeled walkers



Crag hopping | Peat bog

Discover more at: www.germany.travel/naturally-ammergau-alps

In the Ammergau Alps you find yourself in the largest single conservation area in Bavaria. It is a scene of such great natural beauty – Alpine meadows and forests, mountains and picturesque valleys – that King Ludwig II of Bavaria was inspired to set his world-famous residences here. These include the fairytale Neuschwanstein Castle, styled on a medieval knight's castle, and Linderhof Palace with its stunning rococo park.

These days, your hosts in the Ammergau Alps approach time in a very different way. On Zeitberg ('time mountain'), for example, you can follow a four-kilometre circular trail taking in six islands of tranquillity. Mobile telephones are stowed away in the handy phone lockers at the summit for some quality time offline.

Time to discover yourself Lebensfeuer® is a special analysis method that forms the basis of a comprehensive, individual health consultation, a made-to-measure holiday programme and activities recommended just for you. For benefits that will last long after your holiday.

Time for rejuvenation The mountain pine mud of the spa resorts Bad Bayersoien and Bad Kohlgrub has long been renowned

for its soothing and curative properties – this 'black down' is nature's medicine. Bathing in it relaxes your muscles and joints and gives you a feeling of near weightlessness.

Get away from it all ... on foot That is the philosophy of the pilgrims. The Ammergau Alps Meditation Trail takes you from the Wieskirche Pilgrimage Church in Steingaden, a UNESCO World Heritage site, to Linderhof Palace in the Graswang valley near Ettal.

Traditions Oberammergau stages its acclaimed Passion Play every ten years, but in the Ammergau Alps you can experience vibrant Bavarian customs at any time. Houses are adorned with traditional murals, farm hotels keep historic breeds that you're unlikely to see anywhere else, and in bedrooms made of Swiss pine, you'll sleep more soundly than elsewhere too.

Mobility for all – no stress and no hunting for a space Many establishments also offer guests the KönigsCard, with which you can travel for free on all regional bus routes. An additional guide is available to help disabled visitors get their bearings in the region.



Highlights

- **The heart of the Bavarian Alps** – between Mount Zugspitze and Neuschwanstein Castle
- **World-famous:** Ettal Benedictine Abbey, Passion Play in Oberammergau, UNESCO World Heritage Wieskirche church, Linderhof Palace – the fairytale king's favourite palace
- **The healing power of nature:** combining the benefits of mountain pine mud and exercise in a bracing climate
- **The KönigsCard:** special offers for 250 leisure attractions, plus free bus travel in the region



Oberammergau Passion Play

Green cities

Cities in Germany have proven particularly successful in their quest for sustainability: an impressive ten out of the twelve major cities assessed for the German Green City Index scored above the European average. In particular, they have the edge when it comes to travel – from public transport to cycle paths – and air quality.

German cities also stand out for the way they harmoniously blend the old and the new. In Hamburg, for example, the **HafenCity** development with its cutting-edge sustainability standards merges seamlessly with the historical Speicherstadt to form a new district. And the university city of Freiburg with its idyllic old quarter is setting the benchmark in **sustainable urban planning** through the construction of the Vauban suburb.

In the Ruhr region **disused collieries** are becoming hotspots for international **cultural trends**, and in the heart of **Berlin** the **walking trails** along old steam locomotive tracks will delight railway enthusiasts and nature lovers in equal measure. In the banking capital Frankfurt, **meadow orchards** keep the traditional cider in plentiful supply and provide a charming contrast to the **skyscraper skyline**.

Experience green living in Germany's cities.

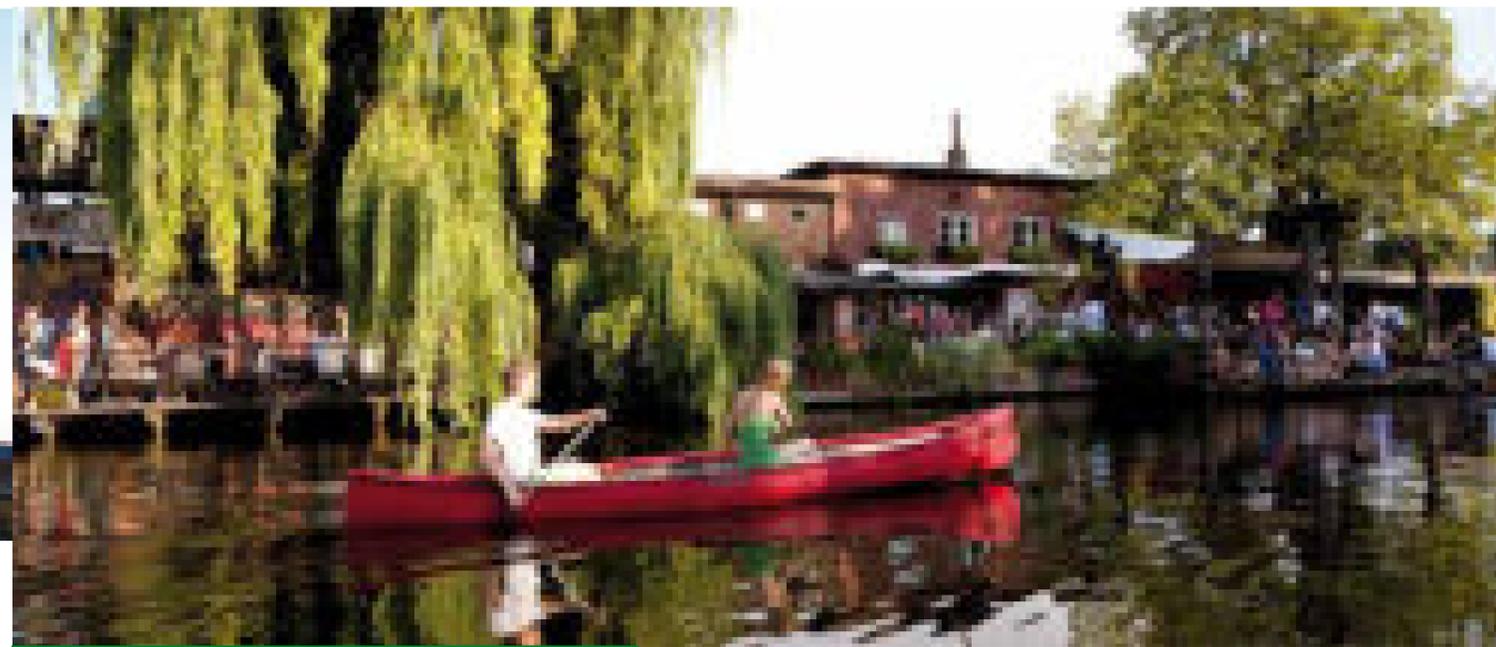
Discover more about the best towns and cities to visit in Germany at: www.germany.travel/cities





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Landwehr canal in Kreuzberg, Berlin

→ Discover more at: www.germany.travel/cities

A timetable for sustainability Major cities and urban areas right across Germany also present opportunities for sustainable experiences. Thanks to an outstanding infrastructure, getting around Germany is not only easy but also good for the environment: Deutsche Bahn provides regular intercity train services, which run on green electricity and are part of a sophisticated sustainable mobility concept. Once at the train station you can transfer straight on to the local public transport network or hop on a ‘Call a bike’ bicycle and pedal to the centre of your chosen city.

Berlin: Germany’s capital, Europe’s greenest city.

The cityscape is shaped by extensive woodland, the sprawling web of the Spree and Havel rivers and numerous canals and lakes. An impressive 6,500 hectares, that’s 7 per cent of the total metropolitan area, belong to the Natura 2000 network of European conservation areas. Numerous conservation areas and protected landscapes further enhance a city that is home to 3.5 million people. There are conservation stations and woodland education centres where people of all ages can learn about the environment.

A melting pot of cultures and ideas, Berlin is home to young people, creative types and unorthodox thinkers from all over the world. Many of them meet every two months for the Berlin sustainability initiatives ‘jour fixe’ symposium. It was here that the public Green-map Berlin was launched: an online platform helping locals and visitors to find sustainable initiatives throughout the city, ranging from the ‘One World Shop’ to the nature discovery garden.

Berlin – Tempelhofer Feld | Hamburg – Planten un Blomen Park | Hamburg – Unilever House in Hafencity has been designed to eco-friendly standards



Free Hanseatic City of Hamburg: sustainability on the regional political agenda

Hamburg has literally hundreds of parks and green spaces. A beacon project for sustainable urban development can currently be found in Hafencity, where the city is regenerating former docks rather than expanding into rural outskirts. Numerous green, economic and social projects are also being initiated for buildings, thermal energy supply and transport. Hafencity is thereby helping to achieve the city’s climate-protection target of reducing CO₂ emissions by 40 per cent by 2020.

A particular highlight for residents and visitors is the ‘Day of Urban Nature’, Hamburg’s biggest nature-themed event, which takes place every June. It features cycling tours, high-wire adventures, boat trips, artistic impressions of nature and guided tours through natural areas that are normally closed to the public.

Bremen: fair trade, fair to the environment

Hybrid buses are redefining local public transport, solar energy, wind power and a hydropower plant are shaping the energy industry.

Bremen was also voted Germany’s ‘capital of fair trade’ in a nationwide competition in 2011.

Visitors can see the city’s innovative environmental concepts at first hand: at the green science centre Botanika, in the Weser stadium’s solar panels, on nature discovery tours to the Weser estuary or at special topical events for delegations of urban planners and city representatives. The Klimahaus® in Bremerhaven is not only a great attraction, it also provides lots of good information on sustainability. The exhibition, around 12,000m² in size, introduces visitors to the complex subject of climate and climate change through a captivating series of installations, sensory stations, multimedia exhibits and unfamiliar animals and plants.



Highlights

- **Wide range of eco-themed tours** including ‘Berlin’s oases of green’, ‘market halls and farmers markets’ and ‘green fashion’
- **StadtRAD Hamburg:** Germany’s most successful bike rental scheme, for residents, commuters and tourists. Compatible with the ‘Call a bike’ scheme operated by Deutsche Bahn in other towns and cities.
- **‘Knowledge worlds’ in Bremen and Bremerhaven:** various attractions providing an innovative and entertaining insight into nature and natural history
- **Weekly organic markets** selling locally produced goods ooze charm and are found in all major cities



Conferences in Germany – sustainability for success

Hosting around **three million events** a year at approximately **7,000 venues**, Germany is up there with the best in the world as a destination for conferences and conventions. And it has added appeal thanks to its high sustainability standards.

Germany's **easily accessible venues, eco-friendly transport** and **sustainably managed congress centres and hotels** are in themselves good enough reasons for planning exhibitions and conventions in Germany. Plus in recent years, attention has increasingly turned to the fulfilment of standards for **social sustainability**.

We look forward to doing business with you.

Discover more at: www.germany.travel/business-travel



The natural home for conferences and events

Germany is one of the world's leading destinations for meetings, exhibitions and conferences. Thanks to its location in the centre of Europe, it functions as a crossroads between East and West and is therefore ideally suited to hosting sustainable events. Short journey times and modern infrastructure reduce the impact on the environment. With its high standards and creative ideas, Germany's MICE sector has turned its geographical advantage into a competitive one.

darmstadtium foyer

Europe's leading
MICE destination:
SUSTAINABILITY
FOR SUCCESS



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→ Discover more at: www.germany.travel/business-travel

Venues that set standards Modern event venues, exhibition halls and congress centres, as well as civic halls and arts centres beyond the major cities, meet the most exacting building standards. Science and congress centres such as Darmstadtium and the newly built Congress Center Rosengarten in Mannheim set high standards both in Germany and internationally. But numerous historical buildings, some of them with protected status, have also been made more energy-efficient. The Liederhalle in Stuttgart is just one example. The Berlin Environmental Forum operates four unique locations in the heart of the German capital. The Church of the Resurrection, Jerusalem Church, the Zwingli Church and the Neue Mälzerei all combine architectural heritage with up-to-date ecological standards and sustainable facilities. Features include heat retention systems, water-saving toilets and energy-efficient lighting with movement detectors and dimmers.

Innovative administration Germany's status as a sustainable MICE destination, already established by its favourable location and infrastructure, is enhanced by a wide range of green innovations introduced by location and events providers. The responsible use of resources begins with a paperless environment. Digital

invitations, online registration and reusable name badges are now standard at many exhibitions, conferences and events in Germany. Digital exhibition guides for mobile devices replace the traditional thick catalogues, providing floorplans, events programmes, lists of speakers and presentation times. Online diary management makes it possible to create individually tailored schedules on a smartphone and update them with the latest information. And, of course, all these innovations have a practical as well as an environmental benefit.

Green foundations Creating sustainability in the conferences and events sector is a long-term process. More and more organisers are now offering add-on services that can help decrease ecological footprints. For example, you can order catering that uses only seasonal local produce or opt for organic food and drink from specialist suppliers. You can also request caterers to use washable plates and cutlery and provide drinks solely from reusable bottles. Some conference organisers use only green electricity or offer this to their customers as an option. As an additional service, other organisers may offer to offset any unavoidable CO₂ emissions caused by attendees travelling to and from the venue by making

Taking the Segway between meetings | The Liederhalle in Stuttgart





Bikes for hire in Berlin

payments to specialist organisations (such as myclimate and atmosfair) that meet international criteria. These payments are then invested in sustainability projects.

Certifiably sustainable Under the title Fairpflichtet ('verpflichtet' means obligation in German), the European Association of Event Centres (EVVC) and the German Convention Bureau (GCB) have drawn up a list of the key elements of sustainability. This is based on the outcomes from the inaugural Green Meetings Conference of 2011 and takes the UN's Global Compact of 1999 as its reference point. On a voluntary basis, companies can pledge to act sustainably in their economic, ecological and social spheres of influence.

Companies in the meetings and conferences sector can have their progress towards 'green meeting' status audited and verified by independent experts. Accreditation under the Green Certified Hotels scheme or the German Business Travel Association's Green Certified Conference Hotels can also provide evidence of a company's sustainability credentials – and commit them to behaving in an environmentally and socially aware way in the future. As part of the certification process for the Green Globe award, for example, companies must submit to an audit of 125 different

areas, such as energy efficiency, local procurement, environmental training for employees and the number of women and minorities in senior management.

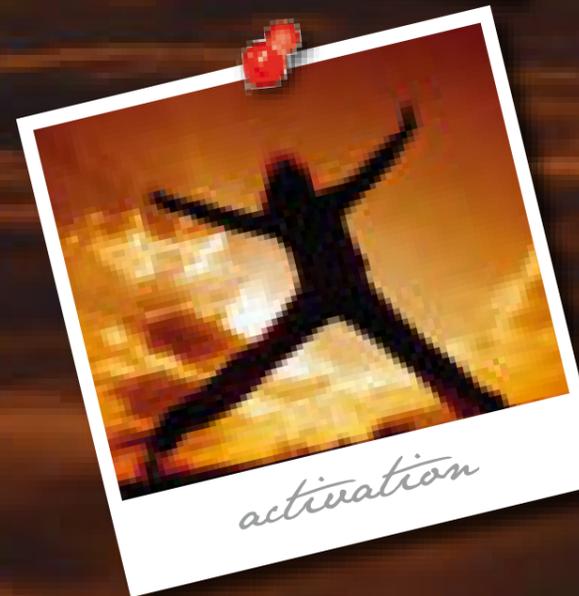
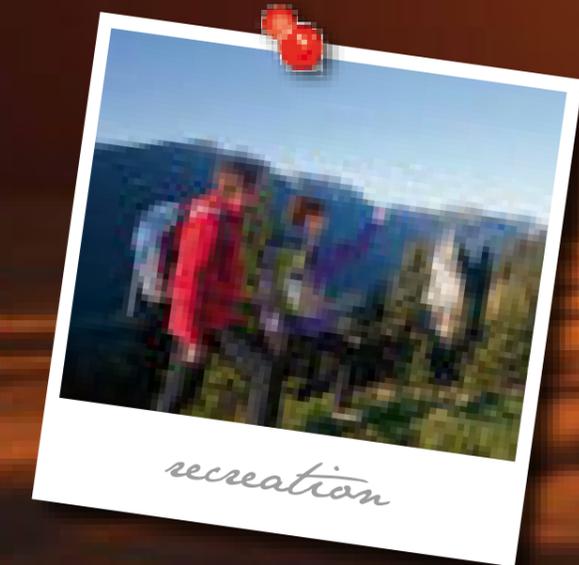
Leading by example At its first Meeting Experts Conference (Mexcon) in 2012, the GCB, which markets Germany internationally as a conference destination, identified sustainability as being crucial to the development of the sector. Five hundred event planners from companies and professional associations are currently being trained as sustainability advisers, as are staff from hotels, conference centres and agencies from across Germany.

The German National Tourist Board's annual Germany Travel Mart™ (GTM) is the most important marketing event for Germany's inbound tourism industry. Over 600 key international accounts, together with journalists from 45 countries, come to find out what's new in Destination Germany. The GTM already has 'green meeting' status and in 2012 and 2013 it received the prestigious Green Note Award.

Highlights

- **Germany's central location in Europe** and excellent transport network
- **Green Meetings:** the GCB's database of certified providers who have already established an integrated sustainability offering
- **Broad expertise in the conference and event sector,** subject to transparent inspection by various certification and audit schemes
- **Good connections:** from event-specific train tickets on Deutsche Bahn (as issued by many exhibitions and major events) to conference tickets valid on public transport in many German cities

Congress Center Rosengarten in Mannheim



Ammergauer Alpen – Germany's first "Lebensfeuer®"-region

"Feel younger than yesterday!" – Based on the so called "Lebensfeuer®" (fire of life) measuring, customised holiday programs for a sustainable increase of wellbeing are designed by the Ammergauer Alps

Show me your heartbeat and I'll show you, what will do you good. The Ammergau Alps are the first "Lebensfeuer®"-region of Germany, creating individual holiday programs based on the concept of the Viennese medical Dr. med. A. Lohninger. Whether a bath in the natural remedy mud, a walk on the meditation trail or a demanding hike on one of the popular peaks in the Bavarian picture book landscape, everyone finds his individual time to relax. Numerous hosts in the "Lebensfeuer®"-region are specialised in medical wellness and give their guests with manifold offers the chance to regain strength for everyday's life. "The Ammergau Alps with their deep-rooted spirituality, their authentic natural remedy, the alpine peat, and the intact nature are standing for high quality competence in health vacations for decades." declares Jasmine Holfeld, the responsible product manager of the Ammergauer Alpen GmbH.



The desire for sustainable recreation is taken that seriously in the Bavarian holiday destination, that the "Lebensfeuer®" was launched as a medical based counselling and diagnostic method. After having measured the heart beat variability by a 24-hour-ECG, doctors and therapists deduce the actual physical and psychological constitution of the guest. Thanks to the visualisation of the data into the so called "Lebensfeuer chart®", the results are understood easily by everyone. An image with diverse high rising flames discloses workaholics and snorer as well as burnout-endangered or youngsters at heart. With the help of the results the experts on site relate the guest to the impulse-group "activation", "recreation", or "balance" and develop in an extensive counselling an individual leisure package, adjusted on the requirements of the guest and its state of health.

By the way: Who books the "Lebensfeuer® package" ahead of the vacation can perform the 24-hour-measure at home. Arriving in the Ammergauer Alps then, the counselling and the individual programme for recreation can be started immediately. The "Lebensfeuer® holiday" costs 189€ per person, ECK-measure and counselling included. One night in a double room including breakfast in a hotel is available from 69€ per person.

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From biodiversity to hydroelectric power

Sustainability encompasses many different areas and touches on social, ecological and economic issues. The following provides a quick overview of the concepts that are most relevant for Germany as a travel destination.

Sustainable tourism

“Sustainable tourism is in the interests of today’s tourists and tourist regions and increases the potential of the sector for the future. Its goal should be to manage resources in a way that meets commercial, social and aesthetic criteria and at the same time has the cultural integrity and basic ecological underpinning to support diversity and the essential conditions for life.” (Source: German



Office of Environmental Protection, based on UNWTO). **The German National Tourist Board (GNTB)** assesses sustainable tourism against specific criteria: **the reduction of**

harmful emissions; the preservation of resources, the long-term economic benefit of **strengthening the regional business cycle**, the social effects of lengthening the tourist season, environmental management, and **the practising of local traditions and customs** as part of an area’s identity. A further important factor is **inclusivity**, which is the net effect of all the measures that ensure tourist services are accessible to all.

Conservation areas

Protection and development as well as research and education are the elements that define designated conservation areas. Each area individually determines the level of public access and the degree to which nature is left to its own devices. The greatest restrictions apply to the approx. 8,500 nature **conservation areas** as well as the 15 large **national parks** recognised by the Federal Ministry for the Environment and Germany’s various regional governments. Over 100 **nature parks** are intended for recreation and aim to be as environmentally aware as possible in the agricultural use of the land. **Biosphere reserves** are UNESCO-designated ‘model regions’. The Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) is



dedicated to developing and monitoring the sites and establishing a worldwide network between them. The umbrella body **EUROPARC Deutschland** coordinates activities and projects based on national landscapes. **Natura 2000** is the network of conservation areas designated in accordance with the EU’s FFH directive (Fauna Flora Habitat).

Transport

In Germany, environmentally responsible transport choices play a key role in the national agenda of reducing our CO₂ footprint. Leading the way is **Deutsche Bahn**, with its **use of green electricity**, and the local authorities, who are extending their **public transport networks** and using **eco-friendly modes of transport powered by hydrogen and electricity**. Electric **hire cars** are also being made available. The German Automobile Association (ADAC), the largest motoring organisation in Europe, licenses special **eco-taxis** that produce hardly any particulates or nitrogen oxide and much less CO₂. A well-developed coach network makes it possible to travel cheaply with a small carbon footprint. **Motorised bicycles** (often referred to as e-bikes or electric bikes) are also widely available. Many tourist regions support this convenient and eco-friendly form of transport with hire stations and charging points.



Accommodation

In Germany, various certification schemes for sustainable hotels and restaurants make it easy to make environmentally responsible choices. Hotels with **Viabono** certification have met high sustainability standards for water usage, waste, energy and food. The scheme’s **Climate Hotels** offer a carbon-neutral overnight stay, while in **Bio Hotels** all the food is organic, rooms are equipped

according to ecological principles and energy comes from green sources. Other certification schemes, predominantly aimed at city hotels, are **Green Globe**, **Certified Green Hotels**, **ISO14001**, **Travelife** and **EMAS**. The independent and constantly updated **quality classification** scheme, in which nearly all German hotels and many B&Bs are awarded from one to five stars, is also a reliable guide to choosing a place to stay.



Food and drink

The natural farming methods and responsible animal husbandry practised by **organic farmers** also help to reduce environmental

impact. **Organic produce** is subject to strict controls and can be clearly identified by a **quality mark**. By cultivating traditional **local fruit and vegetable varieties** and breeding **indigenous animals**, organic farmers are promoting **biodiversity** in nature. Many of the farmers sell their produce in **farm shops** or at **farmers markets**, while in restaurants the use of **seasonal and regional produce** is bringing new flavours to the table.

Traditions

Many of Germany’s regional cultures and traditions are alive and well. Having long been a manufacturing nation, Germany places special emphasis on **hand-crafted products**, from porcelain to cuckoo clocks. The know-how and skills of earlier generations are valued in Germany and are today experiencing a revival, as you can see at any number of **regional festivals**, for which locals often wear **traditional dress**.



Renewable energies

Wind turbines and solar farms send a clear signal that Germany is committed to **renewable energies**. The aim is for their contribution to the energy mix to reach around **35 per cent**

by 2020. At the same time, the last of Germany’s nuclear power stations are expected to be decommissioned by 2022. So to meet these objectives, the construction of **wind, solar, biogas, hydro and geothermal power stations** is being ramped up.

Inclusivity

The right to **personal freedom** and the **protection of minorities** are enshrined in German law. **The Equality of Disabled Persons Act** governs disabled access, giving disabled people equal rights to enjoy their environment. Organisations such as the **Working Committee on Barrier-Free Destinations in Germany** and the **National Tourism for All Coordination Agency (NatKo)** are working with other tourism bodies and service providers to develop accessible services. Their primary concern is to ensure the needs of all user groups are met, including seniors, children and young families.



CO₂ footprint

The burning of fossil fuels such as petrol, diesel and coal is one of the ways that carbon dioxide (CO₂) is produced. This **greenhouse gas** is the primary cause of global warming. A **CO₂ footprint** measures products and behaviours in terms of their CO₂ emissions. Programmes designed to encourage low-impact travel, such as providing close-to-nature holidays in Germany’s tourist regions, help to reduce holidaymakers’ CO₂ footprint. Activities such as hiking and cycling, as well as environmentally responsible accommodation and the growth of regional cuisine, all play a part in making tourism sustainable. Tourists can also offset their carbon emissions by purchasing **certificates**.





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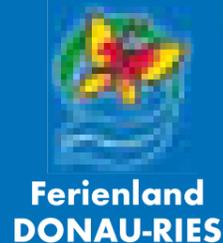
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