

Bergstrasse -- Route Of Mountains, Wine, And Castles

It appears as if the Bergstrasse is all about a picturesque mountain (berg=mountain) region, which follows along the foothills of the [Odenwald](#) from southern [Hesse](#) to northern [Baden-Württemberg](#). But, nope, it's about the wine, castles, and festivals too. You know, that sort of thing. ;-)

The Bergstrasse is a small route, yet packs a big punch. Town for town, Euro for Euro, this [scenic route in Germany](#) has a lot to offer for being only 70km long.

FYI, if you think the 68km of this route can be done in one day, you're seriously mistaken.

The Start Of The Bergstrasse Route

The route starts in [Darmstadt](#). You'll pass by numerous universities and scientific centers there, and enjoy a few grand festivals like the *Heinerfest* in July (with lots of beer, music, and amusement rides).

Your next stop is [Mühltal](#) and its 13th century ruins of [Frankenstein Castle](#). The town also has many 300-year old half-timbered houses and orchards. And since we're on the Bergstrasse you'll want to go up the nearby Ilbes-Berg (a.k.a. Magnetberg).

Your next town of [Seeheim-Jugenheim](#) has not one, not two, but three castles hidden away in the mountainside. The ruins of Castle Tannenberg was where the oldest handgun (ever!) was found, and it was the 1st burg to ever have been destroyed by a cannon. While you're up here in the Darsberg, make sure you see the Castle Heiligenberg and what remains of Jossa Castle.

[Alsbach-Hähnlein](#) is where the Melibokus (the highest point on the Bergstrasse) is located. So proud of its medieval history, the town holds a Medieval Market and a Medieval Festival. But, you've come for the annual Wine Festival, haven't you?

Poor [Bickenbach](#) — it had its castle taken away, as Castle Alsbach was once known as Castle Bickenbach. Don't feel too bad for the place — it has a Villa Rustica, or an old Roman Villa.

We've come to the oldest town along the Melibokus, [Zwingenberg](#). The sweeping views are highlighted by the medieval *Stadtmauer*, the remains of an old castle, a former synagogue, and plenty of framework houses.

In [Bensheim](#) there's a wonderful wine festival on the 1st weekend of September, but don't speed off too quickly. I'm pretty sure you'll want to see the Bismarck Tower on the Hemsberg, all the timber-framed houses, and the castle ruins.

As you reach the border of Baden-Württemberg, [Heppenheim](#) really gets into the spirit of wine and

winemaking. Every year on May 1st there's an annual Vineyard Hike and a Wine Market at the end of June. I'd suggest staying here the night if you want to stay in a haunted castle. Starckenburg (built 1065) is now a youth hostel reported to be visited by the "White Lady."

I don't know if the burg is haunted — it could be wine talking. ;-)

After leaving Heppenheim and arriving in Laudenbach you've officially crossed into Baden-Württemberg. Laudenbach is an old village, but it does like to party. You'll notice that first thing if you're here for the Church Festival (1st weekend of September) and the Christmas Market in December. There are many hiking trails throughout the mountainous region, if you prefer something a bit quieter.

Your next stop is [Hemsbach](#), a town that offers a Town Hall that was once a castle, a Jewish Museum housed in the former synagogue, and a Jewish cemetery. The *Vierritterturm* (4 Knights Tower) is one of the town's most popular attractions. I wouldn't miss it if I were you.

Time to move on to [Weinheim](#), home of the fortress known as the Wachenburg. Sure, it might look old, but it's only about a hundred years young. Unlike the ruins of Windeck Castle — a 12th century structure destroyed by the French in 1674. Also, pay a visit to Weinheim's City Museum to hear about the area's history — from its prehistoric days to around the Merovingian Period.

Let's see, you've got castles, Roman sites, and medieval churches in the town of [Hirschberg an der Bergstraße](#). That's right, Hirschberg is home to the 12th century Hirschburg Castle, a Villa Rustica (an old Roman building), a 14th century church, and the Odenwald Bike Marathon every September.

With all the castles on this Bergstrasse Route, I think someone's confused the Bergstraße with Burgstraße. ;-)

When you've gotten to [Schriesheim](#), you've managed to intersect with the [Bertha Benz Memorial Route](#) (up until the end of the Bergstrasse). Whatever route you're on, the hilly countryside of & around Schriesheim is perfect for a hiking workout. Plus, the view from its hills are simply breathtaking.

As if strolling along the town's half-timbered houses isn't enough. If you want a bite to eat with a stunning view, I'd suggest going to the ruins of Castle Strahlenburg whose restaurant is open from March to December.

Also, it's Spring Festival in March has been going on for the last 500 years. Don't you just love tradition?

There's still a good number of kilometers left on the Bergstrasse — see what I mean about not

being able to do it in just one day?

Hard as it is to pull yourself away from the festivities, [Dossenheim](#) is awaiting. The *Weißer Stein* (White Stone) makes a great lookout point, as does the site of the ruins of the Schauenburg (built 1100, destroyed four centuries later).

Don't dawdle too long, the magnificent city of [Heidelberg](#) is next. The castle ruins sit along the Königstuhl, a magnificent viewpoint that overlooks the entire city. If you've managed to tear yourself away from the Upper and Lower castle, you've got 10 museums, art galleries, and botanical gardens to see.

You know, you'll need at least two days in Heidelberg to accomplish just even half of what Heidelberg has to offer. Do yourself a favor, stay another night. ;-)

You'd think the small town of [Leimen](#) would be a let-down after Heidelberg, but no. It's a nice contrast with its small coffee shops that overlook the steep hills. Try some locally brewed beer after some time along Leimen's hiking and mountain biking trails.

[Nußloch](#) is a town painted with pretty vineyards. Go ahead, have a glass — you've earned it. Just don't drive. Instead, hike up the Hirschberg hill for some pretty views.

The minute you arrive in [Wiesloch](#) you've reached the end of the Bergstraße. Can you believe it?

Wiesloch is chocked full of history, vineyards, and is home to the world's first petrol station (Wiesloch is also on the Bertha Benz Memorial Route). The town's pedestrian zone is great for shopping or just enjoying a glass of wine at an outdoor cafe overlooking the gorgeous [Kraichgau Hills](#).

At the Marktplatz you'll find a public bookshelf where you're free to take or leave a book for others to enjoy. No one seems too interested during Wiesloch's 10-day Wine Festival in late-August to early-September.

With all that vino, I don't think I'd be too interested in books either. Do you?

Technically, the Bergstrasse is finished. However, bear in mind that for one day in May on an odd-numbered year, the route is closed for automobiles from Darmstadt to Heppenheim. Maybe they should do it more often. With all the wine drinking, no one should be driving anyway.

Ahh, consider it an excuse to just tag around a bit longer, it's not like you won't find anything to do. ;-)

Berstrasse Web Site

MyGermanCity.com

Find your place in Germany.

<http://www.mygermancity.com>

Here's the official Web site of the [Berstrasse Route](#).