

Bingen am Rhein -- Legendarily Flames, Mice, And Wine

Bingen am Rhein has been accumulating legends for more than 2,000 years. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is on the southern end of the Rhine Gorge Valley, and even the Celts loved to call it home. The Roman Via Ausonia road started here, and some of the old Roman villas are still tourist sites.

In fact, for history lovers, Bingen am Rhein is going to be a sensory delight. The preservation of buildings from every major architectural period since the birth of Christ is noteworthy. Even those who don't like history will love the stories that go with the famous sites.

Take, for example, the tale of the *Mäuseturm*, or Mouse Tower. There aren't many places that take pride in a group of flesh eating mice, but this is one where the mice were actually doing the locals a favor. The *Mäuseturm* was the home of Hatto II, an evil bishop from the 10th century who deprived the locals of their grain.

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Locked up with the food supply and cackling over his wealth, Hatto II didn't notice the mice. At first, anyway! Later when he realized they were targeting him he tried to flee from them, but there was no escape from fate and he was devoured completely by the mice, who became local heroes.

You can see his tower standing even now, marked and honored by the locals.

As you walk through the town, you will also notice signs with Red Mice on them. This is a creation of the local tourist office, not a warning. By following "The Path of the Red Mice" you will be taken on a walking tour of the major sites.

You will see the Rochus Chapel, where Goethe made an annual pilgrimage, and Klopp Castle right in the center of town. You'll see the Saint Martin Basilica, built on the ruins of an ancient Roman Temples.

By the waterside you will also walk over the Drusus Bridge, named for the Roman commander who ordered the first wooden bridge here in 77 A.D. It's the oldest stone bridge in Germany, and some, including me, consider it the birthday of the town of Bingen as Romans named the settlement *Bingium* that time.

Yet old buildings aren't all that makes this town a good place to visit. You'll also be overjoyed at the white and sparkling wines that are the hallmark of the area.

The rich festival culture here also makes it a lively weekend destination, particularly in summer, and all kinds of events are held. The most unique is the spring Breakpoint event, the world's largest technical demoscene festival, which brings a very interesting crowd into town.

More traditionally, you'll want to check the [current schedules to see when the annual Rhine in Flames event is being held](#) as it is quite the spectacle in July.

Lastly, Bingen am Rhein hosts a Jazzfest each June, and then at least four major wine events throughout the year, including the *Winzerfest*, which is the longest wine event on the Rhine.