

Emsland -- The Cyclists' Dream Vacation Destination

The [German region](#) of Emsland, with its vast moors and heaths, pristine rivers, and dense forests, is a magnet for bird watchers and nature enthusiasts from around the globe. Once nearly inaccessible because of its enormous swamplands, Emsland nonetheless has been inhabited, although sparsely, for almost a thousand years.

The region is named for the [Ems River](#) dividing its northern and southern sections.

Its nearly flat terrain makes it an ideal vacation spot for cyclists. Emsland has several major cycling routes which take in all of its vast open spaces, historical marvels, and modern technological accomplishments. The routes have minimal traffic and maximum exposure to nature. Best of all, they are almost entirely grade-free! ;-)

The most popular of its cycling routes is the 270 km (168 mi) Emsland route, journeying from the town of [Rheine](#) to [Papenburg](#), the northernmost city in this region and the site of the Meyer shipyard. Some of the world's greatest luxury liners including the Celebrity Solstice, the largest cruise ship ever constructed in Germany, have been built here.

The town itself is a delight, with some 40 km (25 mi) of navigable waterways connected by charmingly romantic drawbridges. When the waterways freeze in the winter, they become a skater's Paradise!

For half of your trip to Papenburg, you'll bike along the Ems River. The remainder of the time, you'll be cycling through open meadows and heaths, and the peaceful woodlands of the gentle Hümmling Hills and the town of [Sögel](#). Here you'll encounter the world's only perfectly preserved eight-point hunting lodge, the 18th-century Baroque Clemenswerth Castle.

The center pavilion of the castle was reserved for the use of Prince Clemens August, while his guests and attendants were restricted to the eight pavilions arranged in a circle around his. If you time your ride on the Emsland Route for the last Saturday in August, you'll arrive in time for the Lodge's *Kleines Fest im großen Park* (the little festival in the great park). Acrobats, musicians and dancers, mimes and performers from around the world perform to the delight of thousands.

Perhaps you love the idea of seeing Emsland from the back of something, but would prefer a horse to a bike. If so, your vacation fantasies will be fulfilled beyond your wildest dreams. This region has more than 1,100 km (683 miles) of equestrian routes! You can choose a ride which lasts for a day, or you can choose a tour which will take you several days of traveling from farm to farm for your overnight accommodations. If you're truly an outdoor and [camping](#) lover, you can even bring along a tent and sleep under the stars!

Emsland's Schloss Dankern Holiday Center, 2 km (1 mi) from the town of [Haren \(Ems\)](#), offers a

perfect getaway for families. Set on 200 hectares (494 acres) of forest with its own lake, Schloss Dankern has a water playground with three water slides, an outdoor swimming pool, and climbing islands. There are also a covered playground with a ball pool and romping cushions, tennis, volleyball, and basketball courts, and an indoor swimming pool with Jacuzzi. The more adventurous kids will love the go-carts and the pony rides, and everyone will love the Dankern Castle, built in 1680.

Emsland, with a flat terrain which could have made it one of Germany's least interesting destinations, is actually one of its most charming and exciting. ;-)