

European Route Of Historic Theaters -- Germany's Gift To Arts

Ask anyone about an opera, and chances are German isn't going to be anyone's first guess. Everyone will just shout out some Italian composer's name I think. Ask someone to name a famous composer, and you bet your sweet cheeks that the names Mozart, Bach, Beethoven, and Wagner would be bursting from someone's lips.

There's no denying the German contribution to the arts has been an extraordinary road — even if you didn't know that Mozart and Wagner also wrote operas.

So, in conjunction with other theatrical loving countries (Great Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Italy) — here's the very (absolute very) best of Germany's theaters on the European Route of Historic Theaters, or *Europastrasse Historische Theater* as it's called in German.

Start of the European Route Of Historic Theaters (in Germany)

The German portion of the route has twelve stops. And it all starts at the Putbus Theater in Putbus on the island of Rügen. The restored theater, built in 1821, now has more than 300 performances throughout the year (that's almost one every day), and the building itself is a grand example of what's called North German Classicism.

Wow, who new the island of Rügen was hiding such a gem?

Traveling southward to [Neubrandenburg](#), is the restored Playhouse. It wasn't restored because of [World War II](#), it somehow managed to survive the war unscathed — and it's the oldest theater in the area.

[Potsdam](#)'s contribution to the Route of Historic Theaters is the Theater in the New Palace in the [Sanssouci](#). This is the theater that Prussian King Frederick the Great built, in a Rococo style seating over 220 people for all sorts of operas, ballets, and plays.

Frederick the Great might have had his hand in Potsdam, but it was Goethe (the one, the only, Johann Wolfgang Goethe) that designed the Goethe Theater in [Bad Lauchstädt](#). Works by Schiller, Goethe himself, and Handel have been played here, but it was an opera by Mozart that was given the special honor of being the first thing performed here. Every May to October the theater is still putting on outstanding performances.

Originally not a public theater, the Kochberg Palace Theater (a.k.a. *Liebhabetheater*) in Großkochberg (nowadays part of [Uhlstädt-Kirchhasel](#)) was on a private estate. The private country

house of a very special lady friend of Goethe, BTW. Today you're able to entertain yourself at one of the special occasion concerts at this 75-seat theater every year.

Opulent is an understatement once you've seen the theater at the Friedenstern Palace in [Gotha](#). The palace itself is a piece of history, being the oldest Baroque palace in Germany and all. So, you can just imagine the magnificent theater tucked away in this 17th century palace.

Not only is the venue historic, but this is where theater troupes first gained some "respect," but getting a regular paycheck, specified days off, and even a pension. Not to mention a full-time director to make it all come together.

It's a treasure trove of theatrics at the Theater Museum in [Meiningen](#). Here you'll see almost 300 handpainted stage sets (it's not like they could've been mass produced back in the 18th & 19th centuries, could they?) including all sorts of posters and costumes from the era.

Oh, what can I say about [Bayreuth](#), our next stop on the European Route Of Historic Theaters? We know you can wait the better part of a decade for tickets to the annual Bayreuth Festival every summer with all sorts of works by Wagner. But, the Margravian Opera House is the reason you're here now. You'll love its blend of French Classicism and Italian Baroque — so long as they're playing German operas. ;-)

The Palace Theater in [Ludwigsburg](#) was built in 1758 and in use until the 1850s. It went unused as a theater venue for almost a century; and because of it they've found a huge cache of 18th century set decorations — the only surviving ones anyone knows about.

If you got some, let someone know, OK?

[Schwetzingen](#)'s got a special place in my heart — and not only because of its location on the delicious [Baden Asparagus Route](#), but because of its outstanding Rococo theater that's played Mozart, Bach, and even Voltaire. A fine venue for September's Mozart Weeks and the Schwetzingen Festival in May.

On July 8, 1781 the Playhouse Wilhelmsbad opened in [Hanau](#). Thanks, Prince Wilhelm... your dedication to the arts is still felt more than 200 years later.

We're at the end of the German portion of the European Route Of Historic Theaters now that we've arrived in [Koblenz](#). The Municipal Theater opened its doors on November 23, 1787 to the works of Mozart. Two centuries-plus later, the theater is still performing his works, as well as operas, ballets, and other kinds of performances.

If you'll excuse me, I have this sudden urge to listen to Don Giovanni. So what if it's sung in Italian — the music is all German, Baby, since it was written by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. ;-)

European Route Of Historic Theaters Web Site

In case you'd like to know more, here's the Web site dedicated to the entire [European Route Of Historic Theaters](#).