

German Football Route -- Deutsche Fussballroute

How many of you can't remember your wedding anniversary or your kids' birthdates for that matter, but can recite just about every fact, player, or rule there is to know when it comes to your favorite football team?

My American friends, I'm talking about soccer in case you're all agog thinking about the Eagles, the Redskins, or the Packers for that matter. ;-)

Football fans are some of the most dedicated, hard-core, and fanatic there are on the planet — so what better way to celebrate your love of the game than along the German Football Route, or *Deutsche Fußballroute* as it's called in German?

One thing you must know before you take off on a whirlwind tour through [North Rhine-Westphalia](#) (NRW) — it's not a driving route, actually. The entire route (all 15 towns of it) is meant to be enjoyed on bicycle and by the power of your own two feet.

But, I guess the police won't stop you should you so decide to travel this route by car. ;-)

The signage of the German Football Route is in both German and English, so no one will feel left out.

Except for those who don't read either language, that is. ;-)

Anyway, each town on the route has a number of sites throughout, and all include a stadium of some sort where the best game on the planet is played.

Start Of The German Football Route

The German Football Route kicks off at the foothills of the [Eifel](#) in [Aachen](#), where the Alemannia Aachen are used to hearing some 32,000 fans screaming for them at their new stadium, the *Neue Tivoli*. The old one, known as the *Alte Tivoli*, is also listed as one of the top places to visit — along with the *Elisenbrunnen*, a hot springs that's a welcome relief to tired, achy, soccer-playing muscles.

You go right on ahead to the Aachen Hauptbahnhof, a huge train station where you've got a chance to see an old steam train. I'll be right here at the hot springs waiting for you to get back before leaving for our next town.

Which is [Cologne](#) (also known as Köln) located just off the uber romantic [Rhine River](#). Of course you'll want to see the famous Cologne Cathedral and her 157.38 meter high towers. Five million visitors a year to this cathedral can't be wrong, can they? No, didn't think so either.

The cathedral is close to the Roman-German Museum, but you're here for the soccer so off we go to the Sport & Olympic Museum, then to the *RheinEnergie Stadion*. This stadium can hold up to 50,000 spectators — and was a venue for the 2006 FIFA World Cup, as well as a number of concerts held by huge bands like Queen, Aerosmith, and U2.

Rock on! Oh wow, I think I just aged myself with that outburst. ;-)

How 'bout moving on to [Leverkusen](#) before I look like a total nerd, OK? One of the highlights of this town is the Schloss Morsbroich that's now a modern art museum. Its English Gardens are heavenly, a quiet respite before heading to the *BayArena* (pronounce: by-arena) which can hold 30,000 screaming fans. If you watched the 2011 Women's FIFA World Cup, you might have seen this stadium — which has a posh 4-star hotel.

The Women of FIFA played again in the *BökelbergStadion* in the football crazy city of [Mönchengladbach](#). The stadium also hosted the likes of Elton John who played here. Must be nice to have over 50,000 people cheering for you, huh?

Mönchengladbach is a big sports town. You'll see American Football, Hockey, and Basketball played here — add that to the museums, 13th century cathedral, and 10th century monastery and you've got the best of everything.

Oh I'm so torn when it comes to [Krefeld](#). Hard to choose whether to run off to see Burg Linn (a 12th century moated castle) and its views from the observation tower, or to check out the *Grotenburg Stadion* and imagine running barefoot through its natural grass playing field.

Hmm, the castle does host an annual medieval craft market over Pentecost Weekend, but the stadium has hosted international soccer events. Either way, you can't go wrong.

In [Düsseldorf](#), I'm not quite sure why the [Düsseldorf Airport](#) is on the list of places to see on the German Football Route — and too bad there aren't any Zeppelin rides like you can get elsewhere. So, I'll cut right on over to the City Museum and the *ESPRIT Arena*. It's the home field of Fortuna Düsseldorf — and 54,000 of their biggest fans. It's also a big concert venue when the team's not playing.

Moving on to [Wuppertal](#), and the *Stadion am Zoo*, home of the Wuppertaler SV Borussia and their 23,000+ spectators. The record for soccer fans in this stadium is over 38,000 — which is 12,000 less than it held for a rally given by the [Third Reich](#). Yes, that's how old the stadium is.

Wupperthal's historic Town Hall is also highlighted on this German Football Route, and if you get a chance to hear a concert here consider yourself lucky — the acoustics are fantastic.

On to [Duisburg](#) it goes, home of the MSV Duisberg who play at the *Schauinsland-Reisen-Arena*

(formerly known as the *MSV-Arena*). This is a new stadium, built only in 2004, holding a whopping 31,000 fans. Duisberg's zoo and Inner Harbor are two other places you'll want to see.

Halfway done now. Can you believe how quick it's going?

How about slowing down a bit in [Oberhausen](#), doesn't seem proper to rush through the Art Museum at Schloss Oberhausen. For something of a quicker pace, get caught up in the excitement of the 23,000+ fans rooting for the Rot-Weiß-Oberhausen team playing at the *Stadion Niederrhein*.

It's a smaller stadium that awaits you in [Essen](#). Built in 1939, the *Georg-Melches-Stadion* only holds about 15,000 people for football events and concerts. Funny, I think the elegant Villa Hügel is actually bigger — it sits on 28 acres and has 269 rooms. This massive estate was owned by none other than steel mogul, Alfred Krupp.

[Gelsenkirchen](#)'s got two stadiums. The *Parkstadion* was the former home of Schalke 04 from the 1970s to 2001. The same year they moved into their new home, the *Veltins Arena*. Quite impressive is this elite stadium, holding upwards of over 61,000 people — and sells more than 52,000 liters of beer in a single month.

How does anyone manage to watch a football game? ;-)

It's beer again in [Bochum](#), home to the Private Brewery Moritz Fiege since 1878. After a taste testing trip there, head to the *rewirpowerSTADION* that's hosted both the FIFA Women's World Cup and the German Women's Team events.

What's a sporting event without beer? Nothing, I'd say. Good thing I'm headed next to [Dortmund](#), another football uber crazy city and home of Borussia Dortmund who play at the *Stadion Rote Erde*, and DAB (Dortmunder Actien Bier, otherwise called Damn Attitude Beer by my friends ;-).

OK, so what if Dortmund beer isn't officially listed on the sites of the German Football Route? you can always say you've been to the Hohensyburg Casino and the *Alte Rathaus* (Old Town Hall) instead.

[Münster](#) is our second to last town, and where you'll find the *Preußenstadion*, or Prussian Stadium, built in 1926. After events, you're welcome to visit Münster's historic Town Hall and the Old Mill.

Our time talking about football, beer, and some of the other best things in life are at an end in [Bielefeld](#). Our last stadium to visit together is the *SchücoArena*, a.k.a. the *Alm*, home to Arminia Bielefeld. Their team colors are blue & white. So if you show up wearing anything else, don't say I didn't warn ya.

Of course, you could always choose to visit Bielefeld's Sparrenburg or *Theater am Alten Markt*, or

hike around the Nature Park of the [Teutoburg Forest](#) instead.

Nah, bring on the football... bring on the beer... I'm ready to put my game face on — after all, this is the German Football Route, isn't it? :-)

German Football Route Web Site

For more info, here's the official Web site of the [German Football Route](#).