

German Framework Road — Deutsche Fachwerkstraße

There are ninety-eight towns on the German Framework Road, or German Half-Timbered House Road, or *Deutsche Fachwerkstraße* (now I've got them all, not?).

That's a whole lot of sightseeing of those structures that come straight from a fairytale. It's also a whole lot of sightseeing through six German states (Lower Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Hesse, Thuringia, Bavaria, and Baden-Württemberg) navigating from north to south for approximately 3,000 km (1,864 miles)!

The German Framework Route is nothing short of an amazing time machine back through [German history](#) (with modern conveniences) and we here at MyGermanCity.com will walk you through every village and town along the way.

This route zigzags through seven regions (each color-coded by the officials) and without following some sort of order you'd really be ping-pong all over the countryside.

Blue Route — Elbe River And Weserbergland

Starting in northern [Lower Saxony](#) on the Blue Route is the fishermen town of [Stade](#) which has not only many half-timbered houses (two great examples are its *Rathaus* & *Insel Museum*), but also an old harbor that welcomes visitors to this coastal city.

Traveling south through [Nienburg](#), stop at the Jewish Cemetery (which was used from the late 17th century to the mid-20th). Or, if you've planned accordingly you can shop at either the Spring Market (1st weekend of April) or the Asparagus Market (end of May). There's even an Asparagus Museum to see!

[Bad Essen](#), the spa town, is next which has fantastic framework houses on the Kirchplatz. Of course no fairytale city is without a castle so Schloss Hünnefeld fits the bill; although it's now a museum.

Then again, no good "Bad" town is without a spa, either. Thankfully, Bad Essen has one so you can relax tired muscles after all your sightseeing, walking, and cycling. To be honest, doing this part of the route by bicycle is the best way to see it all, so a spa treatment is a nice reward.

It'll be hard to leave Bad Essen — but, there are more delights on the Blue Route still! [Stadthagen](#) is next with a framework Town Hall, a castle (Schloss Stadthagen), and, of course, many framework houses at the Marktplatz (Market Square). A picnic in Stadthagen's Baroque City Park is a lovely way to end your stay.

[Alfeld](#) has those gorgeous half-timbered buildings all around, an especially beautiful one is the

Rathaus (Town Hall); located right next to St. Nicolai Church (built 1205). The Old Latin School is a brilliant example of a Weser Renaissance building.

As soon as you find out [Einbeck](#) is a beer town you might forget about all those frameworks and will want to rush right over! The *Einbecker Brauhaus* (brewing house) has been making beer for more than 750 years. It's historical city center has plenty of timber-framed houses on the Marktplatz, you won't know which end to start at first! Its Town Hall has been here since 1566 and the Pharmacy since 1590 — they're just as lovely now as they were almost 500 years ago.

Now, go have that beer — you've earned it!

As easy as it is to spend your whole vacation here, it's time to move on to [Northeim](#) with more framework houses from the 16th to 18th centuries (in its *Altstadt* (Old Town)) than you can shake a stick at. Many people like to come here to learn the region's cultural past in its *Heimatismuseum* (Local History Museum), which, of course, is in a half-timbered house (built around 1478!), or sit in the shadow of Schloss Imbshausen and its huge castle park. Or, come to the 13th century Kloster Wiebrechtshausen that's still impressive after almost 800 years.

By the time you've seen the Blue Route, you've gone 447 km, you should expect to see more! This road is addicting, isn't it? ;-)

Russet Route — Elbe Valley And Harz Mountains

Running almost parallel is the russet-colored section running from the [Elbe Valley](#) to the [Harz Mountains](#). It's also the longest leg of all. This section of the German Framework Road is particularly jagged, but well worth the time & effort over the countryside.

Bleckede is the first town; and besides being on the *Deutsche Fachwerkstraße* — it's also on the Lower Saxon Asparagus Route, the Lower Saxon Mill Route, the European Brick Gothic Route, AND the Elbe Cycle Track!

Wow, if that doesn't tell you enough about Bleckede, I don't know what will! OK, I'll find a way though. Come see the Elbhohen Wendland Nature Park and the Elbschloss Bleckede, too.

[Hitzacker \(Elbe\)](#) is your next town, which seems to somehow have a museum for as many half-timbered buildings as there are in town (including a Local History Museum and a Forest Museum). There's also horseback riding, fishing, and golfing in the area of the Naturpark Elbhöhen-Wendland.

When you arrive in [Dannenberg \(Elbe\)](#) go right to the Tourist Information Center at Town Hall, where they'll help you find the very best of sightseeing. The fact that it sits right on the Marktplatz with loads of framework buildings, you've done at least some sightseeing out of the way! Tip:

Don't miss the Valdemara Tower and the old Jewish cemetery.

[Lüchow](#) is next on your towns on the German Half-Timbered House Road. While there isn't a whole lot to see here, you do have a good number of half-timbered buildings in the City Center.

At least [Salzwedel](#) has a good number of things to see! Besides a good number of half-timbered houses, Salzwedel has two original medieval city gates, the *Neuperver Tor* & the *Steintor*, as well as a [World War II](#) memorial. Besides, it was once an East/West German border crossing.

[Celle](#) is one of the most historic cities on this route (not even just this section!). It has an 18th century synagogue, a 14th century City Church, and **over 500** restored framework buildings!

[Königslutter](#) offers visitors a chance to see a 12th century Benedictine Monastery and has an Urban History Museum. You'll learn plenty because Königslutter is over 900 years old.

You might think [Wolfenbüttel](#) steals the limelight with its massive Baroque castle (now a school and a museum) that's direct across from some German Duke's library. What's the big deal? OK, while it might have over 10,000 books, it's 12th century bible that belonged to Henry the Lion is its most valuable asset.

One of my favorite towns, not even just on the Framework Road, is the cute lil' Hornburg. The artwork in the Hornburger Church is simply divine; and the castle is just gorgeous! Hornburg was also the hometown of Pope Clemens II; and you'll find a sculpture dedicated to him in town.

You won't believe what you'll have to see in [Bockenem](#) — nude sunbathing! Hey, it's not like you have to tour the whole town without any clothes on! The town does have a Small Car Museum and many timber framed houses for pursuits where clothes are required. ;-)

In [Osterwieck](#) (now we're in [Saxony-Anhalt](#)) there are plenty of buildings with classicism, Gothic, and Renaissance architecture. It also has a wonderful 12th century church (St. Stephani) and an old castle (don't you just love those?).

However, the artwork you'll find in [Halberstadt's](#) St. Stephen's Cathedral will pale just about any other church's art collection — there are hundreds (and I mean HUNDREDS) of medieval works of art. It also has a beautiful old synagogue that somehow managed to survive Kristallnacht in 1938.

Gorgeous [Wernigerode](#) might not have a 900 year old bible, but, it does have a great deal of framework buildings on the Marktplatz (which is the reason you're traveling this German Half-Timbered House Road, right?). It also has an awesome 19th century castle that overlooks the town high in the Harz Mountains.

[Osterode](#) is next on your list (you're almost done with the Russet Section!). You won't be here too

long, just visit the museum in the *Ritterhaus*, a museum of local history, and the town's two old churches — before setting off for the last town...

[Duderstadt](#) is a town that's over a thousand years old. It's come a long way and as historical as it is — even just sitting at an outside cafe is wonderful. The city's Town Hall has been here since 1302 and the 13th century St. Cyriacus' Church is just brilliant.

Wow, would you believe the the Russet Section is complete?!?

Orange Route — Harz Mountains And Thuringian Forest

Traveling from the Harz Mountains over to the [Thuringian Forest](#) is a particularly pretty section of the German Framework Road; and the orange-colored section is the second smallest part of the Road going for only 204 km (which also runs parallel to the Brown Route below).

Stolberg, part of the new town of [Südharz](#), is one of the best towns on this route and within its Old City you'll find cobblestone streets towards its medieval *Saigerturm* with the Stolberg Castle looming in the background. Stolberg's Marktplatz has a wonderful framework Town Hall.

The Town Hall in Bleicherode has been the center of village life since it was built in the 1540's. You also should stop at the Synagogue Memorial, located at Obergebraer Straße.

As small as Worbis is (part of [Leinefelde-Worbis](#)), it'll surprise you. In addition to having a gorgeous framework *Rathaus* (Town Hall), a *Heimatmuseum* (Local History Museum), and a quaint 17th century chapel in the countryside — it has a *Tierpark* (Game Park) that's a nice break from the historical side of the German Framework Route. The kids will no doubt love it!

It's hard to think of [Mühlhausen \(Thuringia\)](#) and not think of Bach, as he once played here. Seems like the perfect place for the annual Spring Music Festival then, right?

Still traveling south, when you arrive in Wanfried (now you're in [Hesse](#)) — stop! Stay the night at the *Hotel zum Schwan* — a half-timbered building dating to 1690. Wanfried's Town Hall is another 17th century framework gem; and has both a Burg and a palace.

[Treffurt](#) (back in Thuringia) is where the *Deutsche Fachwerkstraße* meets up with the *Barbarossaweg*, a 326 km walking route. Whichever direction you choose to go from here, don't miss the Normannstein Castle (it's massive!).

On the Thuringian/Hessian border is [Vacha](#). Castle Wendelstein is now a museum and right alongside the 13th century fortification wall (called a *Stadtmauer*).

[Schmalkalden](#) might have been heavily bombed in World War II, yet it has come back even better.

Many local shops, museums, and offices are located in those well-loved timber framed buildings.

Brown Route — Weserbergland, Vogelsberg, Spessart

Traveling south now on the Brown Section, you go from the [Weserbergland](#) to the [Vogelsberg Mountains](#) and on to the [Spessart](#).

First stop is [Hann. Münden](#), which has barely been touched by modern times. OK, it does have indoor plumbing, and **over 700** timber framed houses!

Next is [Eschwege](#) where a guided tour is your best bet to see all the town's sites (including the **1000** framework houses!). Its *Johannisfest* goes on for five straight days!

[Hessisch Lichtenau](#) has castles & legends! It's also on the [German Fairy Tale Road](#) — so if you love fairy tales, you'll adore this place! Don't get too hung up, though... we both have a mission to fulfill! Let's continue on the German Framework Road on to our next stop...

Spangenberg has a castle by the same name (no, I will never tire writing about [Germany's castles!](#)) and a Jewish cemetery. That's not all, but there's a good deal to see on this route!

Well, take a rest when you get to [Melsungen](#). The *Gasthaus Zur Traube* has been welcoming guests since 1756 (they must be doing something right). Enjoy some Awl Sausage to refuel before setting back out!

[Wolfhagen](#) meets up with the German Fairy Tale Road (again); and is famous for its story of the Brothers Grimm. You can also walk along the old *Stadtmauer* (defense wall) to look out from the *Kattenturm*. But its Burg and the Weidelsburg ruins are also worth photographing (amazing views!)

Finish up the Brown Route in the Vogelsberg in [Bad Arolsen](#) at the Schloss Arolsen. This grand home might be pure German but, its artwork is pure Italian.

Wait, just kidding, it's not the end of the route yet! Advance to [Korbach](#) which is great for hiking and exploring old mines. I know you took this route to see all the framework houses and castles, but you gotta break it up somewhere! ;-)

[Fritzlar](#) is famous for its 8th century monastery and cabbages. Yes, cabbages — so have some sauerkraut and enjoy the rest of the town. Oh well, you know what I mean... framework buildings, cobblestones, medieval stuff like that...

[Homberg \(Efze\)](#) has only one fortification tower remaining — although, St. Mary's Church (a gorgeous Romanesque/Gothic) is still going strong.

[Rotenburg an der Fulda](#) has a fantastic Jewish Museum (with an excavated ritual bath called a *mikvah*), a 12th century church, and a *Heimatmuseum* (Local History Museum).

After all that sightseeing a rest in the mineral springs of [Bad Hersfeld](#) are quite refreshing. You have 216 historical buildings to see, though, so don't linger too long! Including the oldest framework building in town (the one with the red door), anno 1452, on the Kirchplatz!

When you come to [Schwalmstadt](#), you'd be doing yourself a disservice by not coming to see the *Totenkirche*, the Church of the Dead. A POW camp, Stalag IX-A once housed a prisoner by the name of Francois Mitterand — yes, the former French President.

Seven hundred years of architecture await you in [Alsfeld](#). So do all the cafes, restaurants, and pubs in Alsfeld's Pedestrian Zone.

Can you believe you're more than half way done with the Brown Route?

In cute lil' [Schlitz](#) you won't know which of its half-timbered buildings on Marktplatz you'll like the most. Come Christmas when its *Hinterturm* (terrific views from up there) is turned into the largest red candle you'll ever see!

Onwards to [Lauterbach \(Hesse\)](#) where you have Schloss Eisenbach, the *Ankerturm* (say FRAMEWORK), and try jumping the stepping stones across the water.

[Grünberg](#) is home to the oldest Botanical Gardens in all of Germany. Its castles might not be the oldest in the country, but they're wonderful to see, nonetheless.

[Lich](#) has beer! After all this zigzagging and photographing, don't you think you deserve one (or two)? The Licher Brewery has been making the stuff here for the last 150 years — sounds good to me! Then you're off making more photos in the Upper City part of town where most of those unforgettable half-timbered buildings are.

A Roman garrison, an 11km nature trail and Landgrafen Castle are waiting for you in [Butzbach](#). I love this town!

The best views of [Büdingen](#) are taken from the old bridge, and the history museum has a look into the town's life in the 1950's. But it's top attraction is all the well maintained medieval buildings, gates, towers and walls scattered around town.

Barbarossa Castle and the *Hexenturm* (Witches Tower) are two of the biggest sites in [Gelnhausen](#). I like the 13th century wine cellar — I hope you do, too.

[Steinau an der Straße](#) (also on the German Fairy Tale Road) has a castle that looks right from a

movie set. Swimming in the town's artificial lake is always fun, as is the *Katharinenmarkt* (first Advent weekend), where there's always good food & great Hessian wine. But my personal highlight is a framework building, called *Märchenhaus*, that's got impressive fairy tale style paintings on its facade!

A grand way to end your trip through the Brown part of the German Framework Road!

Yellow Route — Lahn Valley And Rheingau

It's time to follow the Yellow Brick Road, I mean the Yellow portion of the German Half-Timbered House Road. ;-)

[Dillenburg](#) starts off this section. From the top of the town's landmark, the Wilhelm Tower, you can see just about all of the Hessian countryside. And what are you going to find in its City Center? Right... a good number of timber houses.

Hesse scores another winner with [Herborn](#). There's a half-timbered house that dates to 1445, its the oldest one in town — but, not the only one including the 17th century *Rathaus*. Herborn's Evangelical Church is a beautiful church built in 1219.

[Wetzlar](#) is unique in that it doesn't just have plenty of timber houses... it has Roman ruins, too. This place is special — no wonder Goethe wrote some of his best work here.

[Braunfels](#) is the next town on the German Framework Route and worth stopping at the 13th century Schloss Braunfels alone — even though there are plenty of half-timbered houses found on the Marktplatz to see and photograph, too. Braunfels also has little parks to picnic and museums to learn.

[Hadamar](#) is a charming medieval town. The town's castle might be gone, but its *Heimatmuseum* is housed in what was once the castle's stables.

If you see anything when you come to [Limburg](#), make sure its the 13th century frescoes at the cathedral; and the 13th century timber framed house!

Rest up while you can, [Bad Camberg](#) is our next town. Pay particular attention to the detail on the framework house known as the *Amthof*. And please don't miss the *Alte Rathaus* and the *Alte Bürgermeisterhaus*, more half-timbered jewels. The *Kreuzkapelle* might not be a framework style building, but it's worth a gander nonetheless. After that you well deserved a rest in its spa center.

The best part of [Idstein](#) is the *Hexenturm*, its walls are three meters thick! No, correction — the Wine Festival and the 3-day Jazz Festival are the best part! ;-)

[Eltville](#), in the extremely beautiful [Rheingau](#), is the last town on the Yellow Section. The old medieval monastery offers tours of monastic life and on Fridays are wine tasting tours. Sounds like a good ending to a magnificent section of the German Framework Route if I ever heard one!

Purple Route — Rhine, Main, Odenwald

Now that you've finished up the Yellow Section, welcome to the Purple Route — where the [Rhine](#) meets the [Main](#) stretching to the [Odenwald](#).

Your first stop is [Trebur](#) where you can see a 9th century church, a local history museum in a 17th century building, and party hard at the town's SummerFest!

[Dreieich](#) is next on the Purple Section. Whether you choose to just take the town in while sitting at an outside cafe, a hot air balloon ride, or out on the golf course — you'll just love this place (and its Burgruine Dreieichenhain)!

Oh, [Hanau](#) — what can I say about you? This is the boyhood home of the Brothers Grimm and the actual start of the German Fairy Tale Route — nuff said!

[Seligenstadt](#) offers visitors a fantastic look into Benedictine Abbey which has a gorgeous Carolingian Basilica. But one of its framework attractions is the *Romanische Haus* (built 1187) and the *Einhardhaus*.

Traveling on towards [Babenhausen](#), a white asparagus growing town, with its own *Hexenturm* (Witches Tower) and *Breschturm*. Add in a 12/13th century castle and a Fish Festival (4th weekend in July) and you'd never guess you were in a suburb of big city chic [Frankfurt](#)!

In [Dieburg](#) you'll probably take the most photos on Zuckerstraße (Sugar Street).

[Groß-Umstadt](#) might have wonderful Renaissance buildings — but, it also has Nordic Walking in the Odenwald Forest.

[Wertheim](#) is next on our trip down the Purple Section, and you now crossed the border to [Baden-Württemberg](#). It has the oldest Jewish cemetery in this state, first used in 1406; and a restored 18th century synagogue. Visit beautifully restored half-timbered houses and the Abbey Bronnbach (founded 1150) to finish out your stay.

[Milttenberg](#), besides its historical Old Town with all those half-timbered stuff, is a great town for partying! The Old Town Festival is the 1st weekend in July and meets up with the Red Wine Hiking Trail.

[Walldürn](#) is a town for the pious, as devout pilgrims have flocked to see the “Miracle of the Blood.”

There are Roman ruins to see in town, too.

[Erbach \(Odenwald\)](#) has a beautiful 16th century Town Hall and the Gardens of Castle Erbach to see. Afterwards, relax at the pool or spa *Alexanderbad*.

I don't think you follow the German Framework Road this far and not be tired of seeing framework houses, castles, and museums — which is what you'll find when you arrive in [Reichelsheim \(Odenwald\)](#). The town's Fairytale Days are held on the last weekend in October — although the Regional Museum (in one of the oldest Town Halls in the region) and the cafe at Schloss Reichenberg are open year round.

Red Route — Neckar Valley, Black Forest, Lake Constance

The last section on the German Half-Timbered House Road is its Red Section. Just be aware that this route does split off in Bad Urach, one going west to the mystic [Black Forest](#), the other south towards [Lake Constance](#) (*Bodensee*).

The beginning of the Red Route starts in [Mosbach](#) in the Odenwald Mountains. Mosbach is also on the [Castle Road](#), a tourist route that highlights the best of Germany's castles — Mosbach's is Zwingenberg Castle.

From the watchtower in [Eppingen](#), you might not be able to see forever — but, you can at least see the towns numerous lovely maintained framework buildings.

Roman reliefs can be found at [Besigheim's](#) Town Hall; and shopping can be done on the Kirchstraße — a pedestrian only area with, of course, plentiful opps for filling up your camera's memory card to the max.

[Bietigheim](#) is a fantastic maze of cobblestoned streets and a lovely culture center, where you can take in a concert or theater performance.

[Vaihingen an der Enz](#) is where you'll find the Kaltenstein Castle, proudly overlooking the town. When you get hungry try some delicious [Swabian](#) dishes!

[Markgröningen](#) has been home to the medieval Shepard's Run where the town's young men & women compete every year. It's also home to a beautiful Pilgrimage Church and, you know, framework buildings.

In [Marbach am Neckar](#), birthtown of Friedrich Schiller, make sure to walk the *Oberer Torturm* through to the Old Town area with more medieval buildings.

The Abbey in [Backnang](#) is a lovely medieval monastery. Many visitors come to the annual

Straßenfest, held on the last weekend of June. (Straße — Street — Road — German Framework Road — get the hint?)

[Waiblingen](#) has a Pharmacist Garden filled with all sorts of medicinal herbs. There's a pedestrian shopping area on the Marktgasse (with plenty of framework buildings and stuff).

[Schorndorf](#), near the Swabian Forest, was (is?) the hometown of Gottlieb Daimler. Name sound familiar? No? Maybe you've heard of Daimler-Benz? Well, his old house is now a museum dedicated to automotive history.

When arriving in [Esslingen](#), you won't officially be there until you pass under the Pleinsau Gate. After visiting the town's 9th century church, go dip your tootsies in the town's fountain to cool off!

You're almost at the part where you have to decide which route to follow. Don't worry, you don't have to decide yet — you have two more picturesque and framework buildings filled towns left.

[Kirchheim unter Teck](#) is a Swabian Alb town with a beautiful castle and the Prehistoric Museum filled with all sorts of fossils and artifacts.

When in [Bad Urach](#) take a period-garbed guided tour of Castle Hohenurach. Afterwards, go exploring the nearby caves created by extinct volcanoes!

All right, my friends — now it's time to choose, West to the Black Forest or South to Lake Constance. I'll tell you about both, then you can choose your own path (or both). :-)

On the Western Red Route you advance to [Herrenberg](#), a Black Forest gem with many Frankish timbered houses. For nighttime entertainment take in a theater performance or a classical music concert.

[Calw](#) is lucky enough to be in the Black Forest Nature Park; its quaint streets come alive with cafes and discos, and those half-timbered houses are scattered all over the place (say MARKTPLATZ).

[Altensteig](#) has over 700,000 years of history, moorlands, and vineyards. There aren't too many more castles left on this route, so go see the Altensteiger Schloss.

Next up is [Dornstetten](#), where you can stay in a charming framework hotel (*Gasthaus Ochsen*), which is right next to the picture-perfect timber framed Town Hall. After that, go see the Toy Museum, explore some mines, and try a walk on the Barefoot Path (quite refreshing!).

Schiltach is another Black Forest (Schwarzwald) jewel with many half-timbered houses along the Marktplatz. There's also a wonderful Urban History Museum in town.

Lastly, there's [Haslach im Kinzigtal](#) and her old *Silberbergwerk* (Silver Mines) called "Segen Gottes." The Kapuzinerkloster Haslach is a great stop along the way; and hopefully you're here for the Fastnet Festival, held in February.

Your trip on the Western Route is done. Let's go back to Bad Urach, it's time for the Southern Red Route of the German Framework Road.

We're heading towards [Blaubeuren](#) (and meeting up with the [Upper Swabian Baroque Route](#)). Neanderthal Man walked these parts and you can too — but the Blaubeuren Abbey wasn't here (built 1085) when our good 'ol' Neanderthaler was here.

Riedlingen is your next town and it sits on the mighty River [Danube](#). Visit on the Monday before October 16th for the large *Gallusmarkt* — but, Riedlingen's Renaissance Garden is beautiful anytime of year.

[Biberach an der Riß](#) has cheerful beer gardens, two film festivals, and its *Christkindlesmarkt* is a two-week affair with all sorts of international foods & wine. Add that with all the picturesque half-timbered houses and you've got yourself a grand time!

[Pfullendorf's](#) landscape was created from receding ice after the last Ice Age. The town also meets up with the St. James' Way, where pious pilgrims are on their way to Santiago de Compostella in Spain.

This is it — your very last town — Meersburg. Visit the Zeppelin Museum (and I don't mean a museum dedicated to the rock band)! Burg Meersburg is the very last castle on the route; and shouldn't be missed! Come to Meersburg for the annual Lake Constance Wine Festival, which is held in September at Palace Square.

Would you believe you've traveled almost 3,000 km / 1,900 miles through Germany? Now, go enjoy the Bodensee Wine Festival, you've really earned it.

My deepest hope is that you enjoy the German Framework Road as much as I do!

Onwards and upwards!

BTW, here's the official Web site of the [German Framework Road](#).