

## German Shoe Route -- Not Quite What Officials Thought

All right, ladies — get your credit card handy! We're going shoe shopping on the the German Shoe Route a.k.a. *Deutsche Schuhstrasse*.

Oh, wait a minute. Now, if you read [MyGermanCity.com's blog post about the German Shoe Route](#) you'll find that this route was designed to highlight Germany's shoe making roots — but, didn't quite turn out the way officials thought.

Good for us. Bad for them.

Well, we know that this route isn't a widely traveled one — so good for us, less tourists! Bad for them, because there are less tourists than they hoped for.

OK, enough of that fluff... grab the plastic card you use to buy shoes; and let's go!

Now, I'll be honest... we know that shoes are the focal point of this route. But, there's a lot of sightseeing to be done on this route. At the end of the day or week, it's 310km / 193mi long. Use that as your excuse to wear out your old shoes & buy new ones. Clever, right? ;-)

Seriously though, although nowadays there's little left of shoe making and its business (due to globalization, etc.), each town on the German Shoe Route has some wonderful shoe making history.

### Start of the German Shoe Route

The entire route goes through the federal state of [Rhineland-Palatinate](#), starting in [Alzey](#). I know we're supposed be talking about shoes but Alzey has an awesome wine festival on the 3rd weekend of September. Alzey's Old Town also has lots of half-timbered houses, and there's even a 16th century castle.

Passing through Bechenheim and Bastenhaus, Falkenstein is a good first (or next) stop on the route. Well, it's pretty small — it has only about 200 residents. However many people live here, Falkenstein has castle ruins (built 1135), and it's the site of an annual Christmas Market, a medieval festival, and during the summer you can take a summer night tour. In the daytime, enjoy the Kneipp facility (soak those tired, sore tootsies).

In [Enkenbach-Alsenborn](#), you've got two monastic churches to see. There's also the Fritz Walter Museum. Before you ask, he was a famous football/soccer player. If you're here on February 22nd, that's *Peterstag*. The custom is to forgo meat on that day. Looks like its vegetarian for dinner. Great!

You'd never guess that you're on a shoe route, right? Yeah, me either.

Over in Hochspeyer, you've got hiking, biking, and Nordic Walking trails. You've also got a solar heated pool, a traditional *Kerwe* festival in August, and culture weeks with all sorts of concerts, cabaret, and arts & crafts going on.

In Johanniskreuz, which politically belongs to Trippstadt, you've got a health resort town in the [Palatinate Forest](#) that's popular with the motorcycle crowd.

No Harley-Davidson? Come straight to Hauenstein. One of the few towns left on the German Shoe Route with shoe stores, shoe making is still big business here. You'll want to visit the *Deutsche Schuhmuseum* (German Shoe Museum), meditate at the *Schusterdenkmal* on the Lorenz-Wingerter-Platz, and watch how shoes are made at the *Gläserne Schuhfabrik Josef Seibel*. Finally, a walk along the *Schumeile* is in order to buy all those high quality shoes you just learned about.

Busenberg, another forest village, has Castle ruins, a preserved Jewish bath house (called a mikwe) and a 19th century Jewish cemetery.

Eppenbrunn is (yet) another Palatinate Forest village AND climatic health resort town. Take in the annual Music Festival, and then head towards Trulben and its St. Stephen Church (with pulpit from a medieval abbey).

Now, the next town is the second reason you're on the *Deutsche Schuhstrasse*. [Pirmasens](#) is the largest shoe trading center in the world. Yeah, more shoes! Here you can tour the former shoe factory, visit the oldest shoe factory (Peter Kaiser), shop the outlet stores, explore another Shoe Museum, and the Shoe Machine Museum.

Onward toward Wallhalben with its local history museum, Forest Museum, Christmas Market, and cycling trails.

At the edge of the forest is Mittelbrunn. You've got the gorgeous ruins of the medieval chapel Verena; and a May Day Festival (May 1st), City Festival (last weekend in July), and a church *Kerwe* Festival (1st weekend of September).

Not a shoe in sight — but that's OK. I got plenty to keep me busy!

[Landstuhl](#) has 2nd century A.D. Roman graves, and a charming chapel dedicated to St. Andrew.

Then it's on to [Ramstein-Miesebach](#), home to the famous Ramstein Air Base. There's a great swimming complex here, as well as a museum that was once an 18th century tavern and brewery.

The Wildlife Park in Altenglan is the biggest draw. But, the Fire Festival, held every two years,

brings thousands of visitors to the area.

Do yourself a favor and take the guided tour of Castle Veldenz when you arrive in Lauterecken. Then go see the War Memorial. And if you're here at the right time shop at the Autumn Fair or Christmas Market.

Meisenheim is a small town of vineyards, framework houses, and both a historic Town Hall and Castle Church. The town's former synagogue is now a meeting house — and the Old Town Festival is loads of fun.

Not only are there vineyards in Fürfeld, there is a Knights Templar Chapel. Remember those guys?

You're almost finished with the German Shoe Route, believe it or not. Wonsheim's vineyards will have you mesmerized — but, don't stare too long — you've got the Town Hall and Holy Cross Catholic Church to see.

Your last town on the *Deutsche Schuhstrasse* is Wendelsheim. Caves, castles, churches — I can't think of a better place to end my trip along this route.

We've seen tiny towns and villages with fantastic festivals, charming churches, beautiful castles and ruins, and even two or so chances to shop for high quality shoes. It's a historic route that, despite not turning out like it was supposed to, is pretty awesome anyway. I guess this is what makes Germany so gosh-darn special. Don't ya think?