

## German Wine Route (Deutsche Weinstraße) -- The Proud Original

There is an 85km North/South route in the [Rhineland-Palatinate](#) that is the gem of [Germany's scenic routes](#). We Germans call it the *Deutsche Weinstraße*. In English, it's the German Wine Route.

Although it's relatively short compared to others, it more than makes up for it with beautiful wineries, castles, Roman ruins, and some of the most stunning countryside imaginable.

Now don't go mixing up this Wine Route with a few others in some of Germany's other federal states — this is the original. Its origins are a bit shady, created during the Nazi regime to boost sales to German wineries weaseling out Jewish vintners.

### Start of the German Wine Route

The German Wine Route begins in the municipality of Schweigen-Rechtenbach, just about on the German/French border — but, not officially until you pass under the town's landmark, the huge *Weintor* (Wine Gate). While you're here you'll see vast fields of grapes, get a chance to visit Castle Bernwartstein, and find the whole place to be incredibly family friendly.

Your next town on the German Wine Route is [Bad Bergzabern](#), that's also on the edge of the [Palatinate Forest](#) (with lots of walking paths). Its landmark is the 17th century Schloss Bergzabern. However, don't leave out visits to the local history museum in the *Gasthaus zum Engel*, *Westwall Museum*, the *Zingfigurenmuseum*, and the 14th century *Marktkirche*. After a day of sightseeing and drinking vino, a stop at the *Südpfalz-Therme* spa center is in order.

Leaving a spa town might be hard, but not when you're coming to a hamlet like [Edenkoben](#). Ludwig I loved it here so much he built the *Villa Ludwigshöhe*. Then there are the ruins of Castle Rietburg to see. Edenkoben takes wine quite seriously with an outdoor wine exhibition, a Viticulture Museum, and participates in the Wine Celebration at the end of September.

Oh, that's a doozy — the Wine Celebration is loads of fun for its 600,000 visitors; and the ENTIRE route is shutdown to vehicle traffic. The only way to see the route is to walk, bicycle, or skate your way along it.

[Neustadt an der Weinstraße](#) is next on our German Wine Route towns. Come at the end of June for one of the largest folk festivals you can imagine; and Neustadt also has its own Wine Weekends. To be honest, all of the area is just gorgeous with all the grape fields — but, when the almond trees bloom around March/April it's easy to think there isn't a more beautiful place in the world.

Deidesheim, our next town, is rich with history (as if the others aren't!). You'll find little lanes with remnants of the town's original defense wall (called a *Stadtmauer*), a historical Town Hall, and Episcopal Castle. There's also a historic Jewish Cemetery and the town's original synagogue (original 14th century) — now a community center.

Wachenheim is another one of those medieval towns with an old defense wall (14th century) and the ruins of Castle Wachtenburg that was blown up in the 17th century during the [Thirty Years' War](#) (which shouldn't be mixed up with Schloss Wachenheim). You'll find the ruins of a Roman mansion and a 19th century one, and a Jewish cemetery (the oldest in the region), as well.

After leaving Wachenheim head towards the next town of [Bad Dürkheim](#) where you'll see the world's largest wine barrel! Bad Dürkheim does have sightseeing including the Monastery Abbey Limburg and a Celtic Settlement that's known as the *Heidenmauer*. But, this town likes to party! In September, coinciding with the *Weinfest*, is the Bad Dürkheim Sausage Market, also with carnival rides and live music! A jolly brilliant time for everyone. :-)

[Grünstadt](#) is your second to last town; and also likes a good party. In July on the Luitpoldplatz is a "wine market" where many local vinters come sell their wares. There are over thirty in the area, so you'll have plenty of choices as to which ones you like best. Any other time of year, the cycling and walking trails winding through some lovely countryside provide plenty of opps to stretch those tired muscles again.

You're finally here, the last town on the German Wine Route, Bockenheim an der Weinstraße. Well, your trip on the route doesn't officially end until you reach the House of the German Wine Route (*Haus der Deutschen Weinstraße*) which is also a restaurant and tourist information center.

After all this sightseeing (and drinking) on the route, here's your chance to say overnight at an estate guesthouse! After a good rest, visit the 12th century *Martinskirche* and 11th century *Lambertskirche* with Grape Madonna statue.

Visitors on the *Deutsche Weinstraße* will be more than surprised by not just the rolling vineyards but, how sweet the area smells with all the fruit (lemons, figs, etc.) growing. I got so excited I forgot where I put my Riesling...

Oh, there it is! ;-)

## **German Wine Route Web Site**

Here's the official Web site of the [German Wine Route](#).