

Greifenstein -- The Greatest Castle Keep And Campgrounds

For those of you out there who couldn't give two hoots about [Germany's castles](#), you ain't ever been to the [Hessian](#) town of Greifenstein in the great [Westerwald](#) (yet).

I bring up the castle thing because Burg Greifenstein is one of the most awesome castles in the country. Yeah, I know I've said this before. But, really, its massive (gargantuan, formidable, and impressive) twin tower Keep is a feat of Gothic engineering in dark, grey stone; even if the rest of the castle is in ruins.

Within the preserved part of Burg Greifenstein you'll see a torture chamber (as if a 12th century castle would be without one), a wine cellar, an herb garden, and the *Deutsche Glockenmuseum* (which is a Bell Museum with the history of bell making and almost 50 bells on display). Also within the castle is a history of the castle itself, its owners, and many craftsmen's tools.

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There was another castle in what is now Greifenstein (it's made up of 10 villages). Burg Beilstein (built 1129) has been in ruins for the better part of almost four centuries (it was destroyed during the [Thirty Years' War](#)), but you can only see the outside.

Oh well, guess you'll have to go see the Jadschloss Dianaburg instead. It's not a castle per se; it once was a mid-19th century hunting lodge that's a real popular stop for hikers in the Westerwald.

That is, if you can tear yourself from the waterfall between the villages of Nenderoth and Odersberg. Picture perfect.

And if you like those famous half-timbered houses, you'll find a bunch in each of Greifenstein's

villages. One is the Old House, that prides itself on not being a museum. They call it a “living history” kind of thing — where nothing is encased, and everything can still be used.

A more traditional museum would be the *Nenderother Heimatstube* (a.k.a. *Backhaus*), a local history museum housed in an old bakery. Ahh, I think I can still smell fresh bread.

Sorry, that’s bratwurst I smell from Greifenstein’s BBQ grillhuts and campgrounds. Great, now I’m hungry. And with a castle as great as Burg Greifenstein, I’d like a meal fit for a king in its honor. ;-)