

Havel River -- First Famous By The Romans

My trusty Roman historian buddy, Tacitus, knew all about the Havel River, he wrote about it — just as he did about [German history](#) a few thousand years ago.

Sorry, that would be the history of [Germania](#); and another story altogether. So, I digress about the Havel. This river flows all over the place in the East, flowing south at first then going westward into the [Elbe](#).

And there's certainly a lot of ground to cover from where it starts in the [Mecklenburg Lakes](#) near the Bornsee at the [Müritz](#) National Park, to where it joins the Elbe at the end.

FYI, although much of the Havel is navigable, not all of it allows for motorized boating.

The Havel starts kind of unassuming, without much fanfare (i.e., big spring, or anything) near the village of Ankershagen, to the north of Wesenberg.

One of the biggest towns along the Havel is Fürstenberg (Havel), which is located at the Upper Havel Waterway.

What does Fürstenberg have for sightseeing? Well, it's got a bunch of half-timbered houses, a castle, a moated castle, and the Monastery Himmelpfort.

The Ravensbrück Concentration Camp was located here, but I'd rather know it for the Copenhagen-Berlin Cycle Route that comes along this way.

We're still headed south when we get to [Zehdenick](#), and it's famous Havel Bridge/Sluice (that would be a lock). Come see what the land lubbers know. Zehdenick's got a Cistercian Monastery ruin, a pretty City Church, half-timbered houses, and a Bismarck tower.

Our next town on the Havel brings us on the [Oranier Route](#) and the [German Ceramics Route](#) in the town of [Oranienburg](#). If you have time for only one thing, make it to the Baroque Oranienburg Castle.

It's Germany's posh capital city of [Berlin](#) that the Havel reaches at this point. Who would dream of leaving before seeing the Berliner Dom, the Brandenburg Gate, or the UNESCO's World Heritage Site, the unique Museum Island?

I know I wouldn't.

After departing the ultra cosmopolitan Berlin, the Havel flows towards Spandau and the river's main tributary — the [Spree](#). Surely you've heard of Spandau?

No? It's got this incredibly magnificent citadel with an old Jewish Cemetery. And it was where the infamous Spandau prison was located. The Berlin-Spandau Canal meets the Havel at this point along the way.

Now it's time to go west towards [Potsdam](#), most famous not because of the Potsdam Conference (where those cheeky Allied Powers carved up Germany at the end of [World War II](#)), but because of its [Sanssouci Palace](#).

You can even visit a real KGB prison here in Potsdam — a place you wouldn't have wanted to be during the [Cold War](#) years, that's for sure.

A boat is needed to get to the next town on the Havel. I mean, in the middle of the Havel since it's an island. The Island and town of [Werder \(Havel\)](#) doesn't have that many residents, but the ones that do live here are quite proud of their wines and their stunning church.

Oh wow, look... orchids! I almost forgot about those. And I almost left without a mention of Werder's Tree Blossom Festival in May.

From here we're going to [Rathenow](#), which runs along the Wolzensee. This town has a number of churches (St. George, St. Andrew, St. Mary), a Jewish cemetery, and a tower that bears [Otto von Bismarck](#)'s name.

I don't believe we've made it to [Havelberg](#) already. You go on to see the town's St. Lawrence Church, its Cathedral, and its former synagogue — while I'm going to set up camp at the local campground for us.

From here the Havel becomes the Elbe River, where it ultimately goes to the [North Sea](#). And interestingly enough, the Havel is the only river to start out in the east of Germany to flow into this sea — all others go to the [Baltic](#).

Over the last 325 kilometers there's been trivia, big towns and little villages, and other waterways like the Oder-Havel Canal, and passed other rivers such as the Rhin (a 125km river that's one of the Havel's biggest tributaries).

I'm sure you can see at this point the Havel is pretty special — and understand why Tacitus wrote about this beloved river. Hell, I almost can't stop writing about it either. ;-)