

## Helgoland -- The North Sea's Vanishing Wonderland

Time and tide are having their way with the *Unterland* of Germany's Helgoland a.k.a. Heligoland. This settlement on the lower spit of the tiny [North Sea](#) island is where in ancient times (or so legend has it) stood a temple to the Norse god Forseti.

Forseti was believed to protect Helgoland from invaders. He has, however, long since abandoned the *Unterland* settlement to its fate. The village was nearly shelled into oblivion in the final days of [World War II](#).

Since then, while the *Unterland* has been restored as a popular summertime destination for beach lovers, tidal erosion has taken its toll on the sands beneath it. You deserve a visit to this magical place before it's gone forever, so why not set aside some time to make the journey?

You have three choices when you decide to travel to Helgoland and *Unterland*: arrive on the neighboring island of Dune by plane; take the two-hour ferry trip from [Cuxhaven](#) — about 70 km (43 miles) distance at the mouth of the [River Elbe](#) (ferry service is also available from several other North Sea ports); or hire a private boat.

If you choose to arrive by air, you'll be greeted by the unforgettable sight of Helgoland's red sandstone cliffs, reaching as high as 70 m (230 feet) above sea level. The cliffs seem even more impressive because the island's total landmass is only one sq km (0.62 sq mi)

The most remarkable geologic feature of Helgoland, however, and one to which you can easily hike from the *Unterland*, is the tallest lady in all of Germany, "Lange Anna." Simply climb the flights of wooden stairs or take the elevator which connect the *Unterland* beaches and settlement from the island's *Oberland*. There you can follow the 3 km (2 miles) *Klippenrandweg* along the top of the cliffs.

Your senses will be immersed in the fragrance of the salt air and the heady scent of the wildflowers which bring thousands of butterflies to the cliff top meadows.

The highest point on the island's *Oberland* is marked by a cross with a book in which you can sign your name. Just the short distance further along the trail, you'll get a terrific view of *Lange Anna*, the 47 m (155 ft) high free-standing red sandstone column which rises like a sentinel on the northern end of Helgoland. A breakwater extending out into the sea has been built in an attempt to protect *Lange Anna* from further erosion.

Visiting the cliffs of the *Oberland* from early June till the end of July may reward you with one of Mother Nature's most unusual spectacles — thousands of recently-hatched Trottellummes, still unable to fly, leaping boldly into the sea hundreds of feet below! They are just one of the many species of sea birds who nest on *Lange Anna* and the cliffs each year.

After descending from your cliff top hike, why not take advantage of the many duty-free shops which line the *Unterland's* charming promenade? The island's climate is mild enough that fig trees have grown on it since the 1920's, so an afternoon of browsing for duty-free chocolates, cognac, jewelry, perfume, and apparel will be nothing short of delightful.

Stop at one of the local restaurants for a lunch or dinner of fresh lobster, or Pannfisch prepared with mustard sauce and roasted potatoes. Wash your meal down, if you dare, with the same *Eiergroog* (an eggnog-like beverage of rum, sugar, raw eggs, and other ingredients known only to its makers!), which North Sea Pirates drank to keep their hair gleaming and their bones strong! ;-) It will make the perfect finish to your time on one of Germany's vanishing treasures, the Island of Helgoland!