

## Lower Rhine (Niederrhein) -- A Cyclist's Journey Through Time

If you love the idea of vacationing along the romantic [Rhine](#), then Germany's Lower Rhine Region (German: *Niederrhein*) certainly deserves your consideration! This region extends along the river after it leaves the Rhenish Slate Mountains, encompassing its southern and northern landscapes as far as the Dutch border.

The Lower Rhine Region is a land of long horizons, with lush meadows, lonely moors and heaths, and vast nature reserves. Because it was one of the earliest areas of Germany to be settled, it also contains Roman artifacts, ancient towns with moated castles, and medieval watermills and windmills.

I recommend you spend days of solitary contentment hiking or cycling its unpopulated areas or you immerse yourself in the 21st century excitement of its cities! :-)

The *Niederrhein* is a cyclist's joy, with a stunning 1,215 km or 755 mile main cycling route — the *Niederrheinroute* — and another 820 km / 510 miles of side routes. Thanks to the flat terrain, they make for a very easy day in the saddle! :-)

Why not begin at the town of [Mönchengladbach](#), where you'll find the Lower Rhine's only completely restored Renaissance castle complex. Construction of the moated Castle Rheydt began in the 12th century and was completed in the 16th. It's now a museum.

About 42 km / 26 miles southeast of Mönchengladbach, in the Roman town of [Krefeld](#), you'll find the *Niederrhein's* only fully restored Renaissance castle complex. The public gardens of the lovely riverside moated Castle Linn, designed by Maximilian Friedrich Weyhe, fill the summer air with the scent of lavender and roses. Visiting the Castle will give you a clear picture of what life was like for the town's 19th-century textile barons!

Aside from that, the family-friendly Krefeld Zoo, with its rainforest atmosphere, draws nearly 400,000 visitors each year.

Continue from Krefeld to [Duisburg](#) at the confluence of the Rhine and [Ruhr](#) Rivers. Duisburg has been one of Europe's major trading cities since the 1300s, and with 19 harbor basins it's the world's largest river port. In 1512, it was the birthplace of Gerhard Mercator, a map-maker who devised a way to accurately transfer the surface map of a globe to a cylinder.

The Mercator Projection still shows up in today's atlases! Visit the Inland Shipping Museum, and for a taste of culture, the Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum where several of that great sculptor's works are on display.

Traveling south from Duisburg, you'll come to the 12th century town of [Wesel](#), which was once a member of the [Hanseatic League](#). You can't miss the town, thanks to the 380-meter / 1053-foot radio tower! Beyond Wesel lies a stretch of broad meadows so typical of the region.

Across the Rhine is [Xanten](#), and the recently opened Roman Museum (*Römermuseum*). Its ultra-modern steel and glass architecture stands on what was the entrance hall of the Roman public baths. It contains over 2500 artifacts of the daily life from that time. On entering the museum, you'll find yourself marching along in a column of Roman soldiers, as Xanten grows up around you and is eventually destroyed!

Also, Xanten's Archeological Park, opened in 1975, brings more than a million visitors to the city each year.

Keep heading away from the *Niederrhein* in a northwest direction for about 28 km / 17 miles to [Cleves or Kleve](#). The first thing you'll notice is that the town is located on the only hill for miles around! The second thing will almost certainly be lovely Schwanenburg Castle, with its 45-meter / 180-foot tower. The town's best-known resident was Anne of Cleves, Henry VIII's fourth wife for seven months in 1540.

To complete your cycling tour of the Lower Rhine Region, head northeast eight miles, where you'll come to the Kleve-Emmerich suspension bridge crossing the Rhine and leading into the town of [Emmerich am Rhein](#). This is the last Germany city on the river before it reaches the Netherlands.

Cycle along the lovely river promenade, relax over coffee and cake at one of the promenade cafes, and trade in your bike for a paddle boat and an hour on the River! :-)