

## Lusatia (Lausitz) -- Ancient Marshes, Modern Marvels

The [German region](#) of Lusatia (German: *Lausitz*), with its capital [Bautzen](#) dating back to 1002, is a land of ancient and modern marvels.

Lausitz takes its name from the Sorbian word for “swamp.” While that may make you think carefully about considering Lusatia as your next vacation destination, don’t abandon the idea just yet.

Yes, this region has its share of marshes, particularly in the [Spree Forest](#) to the northwest of *Oberlausitz*’s or Upper Lusatia’s main city of [Cottbus](#). The Spreewald, recognized as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve since 1991, is a nature park containing laced by a 1,000 km (630 mi) network of wetlands and streams emptying into it from the [Spree River](#).

Enjoy the Spreewald by hiring a rowboat in [Lübbenau](#), booking a spot on one of the flat barges which transport tourists through its delightful waterscapes, or simply hiking its more than 5,000 km (3,100 mi) of marked trails! Don’t leave without a jar of Spree gherkins, made from cucumbers and considered a regional delicacy.

In Upper Lusatia’s largest city, Cottbus, is Branitz Park. The result of twenty-five years of effort by Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau, this is a must-see for gardeners. With paths have been meticulously laid out to create three-dimensional gardenscapes, each of its areas has a man made water course channeling water from the River Spree.

Branitz Castle, home of the Prince Pückler Museum, stands in the heart of the Park. The Prince himself is buried beneath one of the Park’s two pyramids.

Lower Lusatia (*Niederlausitz*), southeast of [Berlin](#), is a land of rivers, lakes, rolling hills, and moors. Once a thriving mining area, in recent years Lower Lusatia has seen many of the mines abandoned after [Germany’s reunification](#) undergo startling transformations into recreational areas which include the largest chain of man-made lakes in Europe.

A trademark of Lower Lusatia is the F60. Weighing in at 11,000 metric tons, standing 80 m (262 feet) tall, and stretching 501 m (1,626 feet) from end to end, it’s a conveyor bridge still located in the Lichterfeld open-cast mine. You can learn all about the F60 and the history of lignite mining at the nearby visitors’ center.

Close to the F60, in the town of Klettwitz (in Schipkau), is another of Lower Lausitz’ modern marvels, the *EuroSpeedway Lausitz*. Opened in 2000 on the site of a lignite mine, it’s the largest motorway in Germany and draws racing competitors and fans from around the globe!

A far older structure is Bautzen’s Ortenburg Castle. A collection of 17 towers and bastions, the

castle affords a sweeping view of the entire city. The Baroque yellow *Rathaus*, or Town Hall, was built in 1705. Behind it is one of the Germany's most unusual churches, Dom St. Petri. Known as a *Simultankirche*, since 1524 this church has allowed both Roman Catholics and Protestants to worship simultaneously while separated by a fence.

For a great souvenir of your visit, pick up a 200 ml (6 ounce) tube of Bautzen mustard, one of the town's principal products!

30 miles east of Bautzen lies [Görlitz](#). At the *Obermarkt*, with its elaborate Renaissance homes, you'll get a glimpse into the Görlitz' prosperous past. Its *Altstadtbrücke* (Old Town Bridge) has existed since 1298! Learn why the clock on the tower of the *Dreifaltigkeitskirche* (Church of the Holy Trinity) is set seven minutes fast.

Don't miss the Karstadt, Görlitz' incredible Art Nouveau department store, with its unmistakable stained glass cupola. Finally, take a tour of the Landskron Brewery, one of the few remaining independent German breweries. Treat yourself to a glass of Landskron Hefeweizen, one of Germany's top beers!

A land of wonders both ancient and 21st-century, the Lusatia certainly deserves attention as a place to spend your next vacation!