

## The Nibelungen Route Brings The Nibelungenlied To Life

If it wasn't for Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, or The Ring of the Nibelung, many of us might never have heard the story of the *Nibelungenlied*, or The Song of the Nibelungs.

The opera talks (sings, silly me) of greed, love, and revenge. Same as the story of the *Nibelungenlied*, a story written by an unknown author from the Middle Ages.

This Nibelungen Route is fairly long and includes the shorter [Nibelung-Siegfried Route](#), another [scenic route in Germany](#). It is about some of the same characters mentioned in the epic story.

### Start of the Nibelungen Route

The Nibelungen Route starts in [Xanten](#), the city where Siegfried was born. Every year on Ascension Day there's a Siegfried Festival, but you're able to visit the Siegfriedmuseum (formerly called *Nibelungen(h)ort*) just about any time. Same for the St. Victor Cathedral and the Archaeology Park with its Roman Museum.

[Königswinter](#) might be more familiar to those who know the story of Charlemagne, but it is where the *Nibelungenlied* says Siegfried slays a dragon. A visit to the *Nibelungenhalle* (Nibelung Hall), the Zoo, the *Drachenhöhle* (Dragon's Cave), and the ruins of a 12th century castle are all you need to know. ;-)

Sorry, no dragon slaying in [Alzey](#). It's the vineyards and half-timbered houses that you'll want to see, as well as the "Ring of the Nibelungs" at its fountain.

Stop in [Gernsheim](#) to see its wonderful Baroque church (with an onion dome, no less), or to party at its annual Fisherman's Festival before you advance to our next stop on the Nibelungen Route.

[Worms](#) is vital to the story of the *Nibelungenlied*. It's where the Kings of Burgundy held court, and a proper place for a Nibelungen Museum. Worms' St. Peter's Cathedral is the other must-see while traveling along this fairytale journey.

Wait. I take that back. It's believed that the *Nibelungenlied* was a story (a legend?) about real people from around the 5th or 6th century. The Burgundians were real, as were the Huns who are also mentioned.

The Burgundians, BTW, were actually said to be Scandinavian, and thought to have originated from some eastern [Germanic Tribe](#).

Anyway, back to the Nibelungen Route...

[Lorsch](#), most famous for its Abbey, is on the route because in the story Kriemhild's mother (that would be Siegfried's mother-in-law) was said to have donated money to this 8th century abbey. In reality, the Lorsch Abbey did receive donations from a woman benefactress; and is now a much-visited [UNESCO World Heritage Site](#).

Isn't it nice to put real places with those of a story? I hope this incredible tale (that's been called "the Iliad of Germany") has started to come alive for you.

Up until [Wertheim](#), this longer Nibelungen Route now shares its path with the Nibelung-Siegfried Route.

Siegfried was said (or sung) to be murdered in the hamlet of Odenheim (part of [Östringen](#)). Make a prayer for him at the *Siegfriedbrunnen* fountain (after snapping photos).

Chapter XXI of The Song of the Nibelungs mentions our next town. [Großmehring](#) is where the Burgundians crossed the [Danube](#) river — except that it was called Moeringen.

Whatever it's called, Großmehring has a Nibelung Museum (located at the *Rathaus* (Town Hall)), a Nibelung Fountain, and a gorgeous 13th century church. Not bad for a prehistoric town that has seen everyone from Celts, to Romans and a slew of Germanic Tribes.

Located on the Limes (the edge of the Roman Empire — not the citrus fruit) is Pförring. The *Nibelungenlied* says this is where Siegfried's wife's (Kriemhild in German, Gudrun in English) was met on her way to Etzel's Castle from the city of Worms. It's also where the Swan Maidens had a hand in the death of Hagen (Siegfried's murderer).

[Plattling](#) is where Kriemhild spent the night on her trek to Passau. However, where she stayed is a bit different from where you'll find Plattling today because the entire village was moved in 1370 in order to avoid flooding.

I can't even begin to think how you move an entire village. I can, however, think about how great the Nibelungen Festival is. Too bad it takes place only once every four years (I missed the one in 2010). In between is the Nibelung Market, which also takes place every four years (and again, I

missed it in 2008). Next time, we'll be there, OK?

[Passau](#) is the last town on the Nibelungen Route (the German portion, that is), and it's thought that the tale was written here. No evidence says for sure, but experts believe they have enough to believe it. The story says that Kriemhild's uncle was the Bishop of Passau, which is the reason why you've come.

After you've finished the story of The Song of the Nibelungs, you'll enjoy the city of Passau — called the *Dreiflüssestadt* (City of Three Rivers) because it's where the [Inn](#), the Ilz, and the mighty Danube got married.

Oh wait, the *Nibelungenlied* story doesn't end in Passau — it continues on to Austria. And in fact, the Nibelungen Route goes along the Danube until Esztergom in Hungary. But, I think I'm staying right here in Passau to visit the massive Veste Oberhaus (a former fortress), the Maria Hilf Monastery, and to raise my glass of beer to whomever wrote this incredible tale.

## **Nibelungen Route Web Site**

For a bit more information, here is the Web site of the [Nibelungen Route](#).