

Palatinate Forest -- Whine, Landscapes, Fresh Air

The Palatinate Forest region comprises the Haardt and Wasgau hills and is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve since 1992 — you'll be glad this is so. The region is home to a variety of exciting wild life and plant varieties that will have the enthusiast doing cartwheels.

Besides this, there are the dramatic outcrops of red sandstone in the Wasgau area that adds tremendously to the character of the place making it a visitor's unabashed first choice when it comes to natural beauty.

The Palatinate forest is no respecter of borders and continues on across the Vosges mountain of France to form the largest forest in Europe. That should give you an idea as to its immensity and grandeur.

But did you know that the region was once the seat of royalty and the very word Palatinate comes from the Latin word palatium which translates to "palace"? Not much of that majestic era is left to us as war after war ravaged the region and left it bereft of its magnificent past.

The Berwartstein Castle is the one that got away or was rebuild to its former glory. It comes with its own legends and history that will have you enchanted.

Another amazing feature of the Palatinate Forest is the Altdahn-Grafendahn-Tanstein group of castles carved out of red sandstone cliff face. Once again you'll encounter enigmatic tales that will have you transfixed.

Religious architecture is a constant feature wherever you go in Germany. Likewise here in the Palatinate Forest region you don't have to go far to encounter one. The cathedral at [Speyer](#) is a magnificent Romanesque beauty dating back to the 11th century. Its historical significance is revealed as you gaze at the crypt holding the remains of emperors and bishops.

More Palatinate wonders await you in the form of natural formation like the Devil's Table which is an incredible act of balance executed by nature, and the bride and groom feature that resembles a couple of rock lovers. The closer you get to them, the more they amaze you with their natural yet eccentric beauty.

Though these are not for climbing, the Palatinate forest is a rock climber's playground. The hikers and bikers will not be disappointed either. The mountain slopes and extensive woodlands together with the glorious climate make this region ideal for any amount of outdoor activities.

The Palatinate forest is not just about woods and strange rock formations, however. The beautiful climate and generous sunshine has gifted the region with vineyards and orchards that add considerably to the natural splendor. Wild chestnut blossoms burst forth in spring along with

almonds and apricots, infusing the area with tantalizing odors.

The region is also known for tobacco, so chances are that might be in the air as well. ;-)

When you've had your fill of the bird calls and fresh air, you might want a change of pace to lull you back before hitting the chaos of a big city. Make your way to the comparatively sedate St. Martin's Square for a piping hot latte, or visit the Palatinate Gallery for a fix of art. The choice is yours.