

Rhineland (Rheinland) -- Greeting Quintessential Germany

Vacationing in Rhineland (German: *Rheinland*) is an experience of quintessential Germany.

Whether you bike or drive along the [Rhine](#), or hike the *Rheinsteig*, you'll be surrounded by endless vineyards, stand in the shadow of countless castles, and spend your days wandering among idyllic villages. You'll hear tales of mysterious and legendary figures from long ago, and you'll understand exactly why the Rhine inspired so many of the greatest German and British Romantic poets!

Begin your trip through the Rhineland in [North Rhine-Westphalia](#) at the chic city of [Düsseldorf](#) with a stroll along its elegant *Königsallee*. Düsseldorf is both one of the wealthiest cities of Germany, and the the busiest city in the Rhineland. Enjoy a final taste of urban shopping, dining, and nightlife here before you're immersed in "authentic" Rhineland life!

It's a different world 38 km or 23 miles to the south, in [Cologne \(Köln\)](#). Roman legions marched into Cologne in 38 B. C., and you can still visit the ruins they left behind. The Cologne Cathedral or *Kölner Dom* with its 157-meter / 515-foot towers is the largest in Germany, but it's only one of dozens of restored churches. Get a taste of the artistic life at both the Museum of Applied Art, and the Ludwig Museum with its collections by Picasso and Warhol.

The city's oldest streets and squares are full of enchanting fountains with fairytale figures. Treat yourself to a mug of Kölsch and sample fresh chocolate at the Chocolate Factory!

South of Cologne is the Beethoven's birthplace, the former West German capital of [Bonn](#). Visit the museum in his honor (even his ear trumpets are there!). Bonn is where you can begin the 320 km / 200-mile Rheinsteig hiking trail. Connecting the Middle Rhine Valley with the vineyards of the [Rheingau](#) the Rheinsteig will first lead you through the hills of [Westerwald](#), atop many of which sit ancient fortresses or castles.

You'll eventually arrive at [Koblenz](#), where a Roman camp was established in 9 B.C. (on the site of which now stands the magnificent 18th century Electoral Palace). The [Teutonic Knights](#), in 1216, established their first base here on a promontory above the confluence of the Rhine and [Moselle](#) Rivers. Enjoy a glass of Moselle wine at the Wine Village above the Pfaffendorf Bridge. It should put you in the mood for what comes next at [Boppard](#)! ;-)

The mile-long riverfront promenade at Boppard (and the town itself) are at the heart of the Middle Rhine's largest wine-producing area. Wine has been produced here for more than 13 centuries! The Romans built a fort here in 360 A.D., and it still remains right next to the Boppard train station.

Boppard is also a great place to take a cruise to the Loreley, the legendary rock from which a mysterious and beautiful siren enticed sailors to wreck their ships on the shoals at the base of the

River's cliffs. From the top of 302-meter / 991-foot Gedeon's Eck, you'll get a unique look at the way the Rhine seems to split apart into four separate lakes!

Boppard also lies at the foot of the Rhenish Slate Mountains, if you have the time *and energy* for some forest hiking. ;-)

Just 14 km or 8 miles up the River is St. Goar, where the Katz, Maus, and Rheinfels Castles watch your approach from above. Loreley Night, held here each September, provides both a pyrotechnical salute to a romantic German legend, and a fitting close to the Rhineland's annual Rhine in Flames celebration (*Rhein in Flammen*)!

You'll soon pass the Rhine Gorge, where the River is at its narrowest and shallowest, leaving [Rhineland-Palatinate](#) and entering [Hesse](#). This is the Rheingau, and nearly all its villages between Assmannshausen and [Wiesbaden](#), where the Rheinsteig ends, are important wine producers! Just 14 km / 8 miles further is [Mainz](#), the hometown of Johannes Gutenberg and one of the few places in the world where copies of his Bible are on display.

If your *Rheinland* vacation allows time for a trip to [Worms](#), you'll see not only St. Peter's Cathedral — where Martin Luther refused to recant his beliefs in 1521 — you'll also see the Church of Our Lady (*Liebfrauenkirche*) for which one of the best-known of German wines, *Liebfraumilch*, is named!

Then head 48 km / 30 miles southeast, to the last major stop on your Rhineland vacation (okay, a bit off of the *Rheinland* region), the ancient city of [Heidelberg](#). There's no better way to sum up what wine means to the Rhineland than to visit the magnificent red-walled Heidelberg Castle looming above the city's eastern edge — for a look at the Heidelberg Tun or *Große Fass*. What's that?

Just the world's largest wine barrel, residing in the Castle's cellar. Built in 1751, its construction consumed 130 (!) oak tree trunks. At 7 m / 22 feet high and 8.5 m / 27 feet across, it's large to have a dance floor on its top. Its 58,124 gallon (200,017 liter) capacity was created to hold the wine Germany's Prince Elector Karl Theodor collected as taxes.

After all your travels, you deserve to enjoy as much Rhineland wine as you can handle. Return to Worms, and pick up the German Wine Route (*Deutsche Weinstraße*) to the west. Follow it along the eastern edge of the vast [Palatine Forest](#), and your vacation in the *Rheinland* will open up the possibilities of many more adventures!