

Spree Forest (Spreewald) -- Wendish, Sorbish, And German Culture

I know you've had to heard about the [Spree River](#), but have you heard about the Spree Forest, or *Spreewald* in German? This forested region that encompasses a UNESCO Biosphere is 484 square kilometers of Ice Age created goodness.

There are over 200 channels of waterways within the Spree Forest; and believe it or not — in some regions mail is delivered by boat.

What is this, Venice? No, it's [Brandenburg, Germany](#) and just about 100km to the south of [Berlin](#).

Notice I didn't say it's strictly "German." The Spreewald is home to the Wendish Sorbs (a Slavic people from the days of the [Holy Roman Empire](#)) who settled here centuries ago. So, while you might not hear anyone speaking Italian, it won't be unheard of to hear people speaking Sorbian.

Don't know how anyone can be talking anyway, everyone should be too busy eating. This is the land of cucumber, even giving the Spree Forest its own scenic route — the *Gurken-Radweg*, or Cucumber Bicycle Trail. The best time to do this is from March to October, just so you're prepared.

Cucumbers aren't the only species growing around here, BTW. Some 18,000 species of plants live in the grasslands. I don't, however, think that all of them are edible. ;-)

The Spreewald's gotta have something to attract the millions of people it sees every year. Some come for the UNESCO Biosphere, which is an area only 48 hectares big.

Some come for the outdoor recreational activities, like boating (pretty easy to rent a boat here) or bicycling. Oh, I guess you're following the *Spreeradweg* then, another scenic route.

Please, if being outdoors isn't for you, then a spa experience is just what you need. You will miss out on all the canoeing and kayaking that way, though.

Tell ya what, start your Spree Forest visit in Golßen, which is full of historic houses and has one of the oldest churches. Besides, we'll go from there to see the best of the Spreewald.

On top of it, Golßen is within a conservation area of the Spree Forest.

Our next town is [Lübben](#), with a castle (you had to know I was gonna find one somewhere), a City & Regional Museum, and a castle island that's a venue for all sorts of cultural events and concerts.

Close in name is [Lübbenau](#), where a boat ride along the canal is a must. Afterwards, visit the *Altstadt*, the castle, the Local History Museum, and find a cycling trail.

One of Lübbenau's villages is Lehde, where Wendish dress and culture are sure to be seen. A Spree Forest barge ride is most definitely in order, and seeing the mailman deliver your post via boat is not out of the ordinary.

Speaking of Wendish, [Vetschau](#) is home to a Wendish-German Church, and a castle — which is one of only forty reconstructed Slavic castles, which is also a restaurant and a Lusatian Archaeology Museum.

You better leave your car in a safe spot, since over in Burg (Spreewald) there is no vehicle access to the Spree Forest. Please, it's not so bad... This inland delta in the [Spree-Neiße District](#) (the other two of the Spree Forest are the [Dahme-Spreewald](#) and the [Oberspreewald-Lausitz](#)) is best explored on foot.

[Cottbus](#), or Chosebuz in Lower Sorbian, is the last town on our Spreewald trip. This old city has a Castle (with Castle Church), a Wendish Museum, an Art Museum, a *Stadtmauer* (with a 31-meter high tower), lots of theaters, and a planetarium.

Wow, it sure is nice to go from ancient history to the far reaches of space!

Just because I'm ending it here in Cottbus doesn't mean you're done with the Spree Forest. There's a lot to be done, so good thing there are over 25 campsites, and 10,000 hotel "beds" to get some rest — and do it all over again.

Make that 9,999 — I'm taking one, so long as it has room service.