

Teutoburg Forest (Teutoburger Wald) Is A Hiker's Eden

A gingerbread house in the heart of a deep dark forest — no one is certain which deep dark forest the Brothers Grimm had in mind when they penned their tale of Hänsel and Gretel.

The Teutoburg Forest (German: *Teutoburger Wald*) in the state of [North Rhine-Westphalia](#), however, has roots in the earliest history of Germany, and the Teutoburg town of [Borgholzhausen](#) has been built on gingerbread. This region, in other words, offers a little of everything which makes it perfect for a vacation in Germany!

The Teutoburg Forest extends in a 97 km or 60 mile northwest-to-southeast line north of [Münster](#). It is best known as the place in which the German chieftain Arminius, in 9 A.D., turned back the Roman general Germanicus and put in motion the slow decline of the Roman Empire.

Today, however, the area offers some of the best hiking in all of Germany, with trails which seem untouched since the days of Arminius.

The two *Hermannshöhen* hiking trails traverse the Teutoburg Forest on a ridge separating Westphalia from [Lower Saxony](#), offering magnificent views of each. The *Hermannsweg* trail begins at [Rheine](#) among the old castles of [Münsterland](#) and ends at the 1500-foot high Velmerstot crags. Along the way, the century-old paths pass ancient abbeys, castles, and a monument to Hermann the Cheruscan, otherwise known as Arminius.

Another favorite trail is the *Eggeweg*, which extends from the Velmerstot crags to the *Externsteine*, a collection of Neolithic sandstone formations. Nearby are a grove of centuries-old trees, which according to legend were sacred to the ancient Germans. Legend also has it that on this spot, Hermann the Cheruscan sacrificed his Roman captives!

The *Eggeweg* walking trail ends at [Marsberg](#), a 9th-century town on the banks of the river Diemel.

At the foot of the *Eggeweg* trail in the southern end of the Teutoburg Forest is the mineral and mud spa [Bad Driburg](#), where you can enjoy a soak in the thermal baths. A complete but fascinating departure from the ancient landscape of the forest, and well worth a visit, is Bad Driburg's Leonardo Glass Cube pavilion, completed in 2007.

Also close to the *Eggeweg* trail is the town of [Schloß Holte-Stukenbrock](#), which celebrated its 850th anniversary in 2004. Not only is it one of the oldest settlements in North Rhine-Westphalia; it's the home of the Hollywood Safari Park. Visit the Park for a look at its extremely rare white tigers.

If you'd like to explore one of the many castles in the Teutoburg Forest area, a good place to begin is with the 13th-century Sparrenburg Castle in the city of [Bielefeld](#), just 15 km or 9 miles from Schloß Holte-Stukenbrock. During its life it has served as a fortress, prison, and home to the

Counts of Ravensburg, having undergone numerous renovations.

Beneath the castle are nearly 300 meter or 1000 feet of underground tunnels, parts of which are available for tours. Climb the castle tower for an unparalleled view of Bielefeld and the surrounding landscapes.

If you visit this region at the end of July, be sure to enjoy a re-enactment of medieval life at the annual *Sparrenburgfest*.

You see, while the Brothers Grimm have long since vanished into history, their magic still awaits you as a visitor to the Teutoburg Forest! ;-)