

Vacha -- Endless Choices, Vivid Crossroads

Have you ever come to a serious crossroad in your life? Do you turn left? Do you turn right? Whatever choice you make, the possibilities are endless, are they not?

It's kind of like that here in the town of Vacha. I know, it always sounds so cryptic when I talk (*write*) like that, but the choice as to which route you choose to follow while you're here — is kind of like life in general, is it not?

I'm not sure if you guessed by now, Vacha lies along the [Werra River](#), and a couple of scenic routes (hence the whole thing about choice of routes), like the [Via Regia](#) (also called *Ökumenischer Pilgerweg* around here), the [German Framework Road](#), and along the former Inner German Border.

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What's really nice about Vacha being on a holy pilgrimage route towards Santiago de Compostela is you get to see such pretty churches along the way. Although, I'm guessing the ruins of the 15th century *Annenkapelle* would have been pretty back in the day. At least the Protestant Church of St. John is intact, as is the old monastery church — where you can see beautiful 15th century wall paintings.

FYI, for those on a spiritual pilgrimage, Vacha has a Pilgrim Hostel offering basic (but comfortable) accommodations for those needing to spend the night, plus a few private locations.

As for the German Framework Road, rest assured you're bound to see some fantastic half-timbered houses. I'm not usually inclined to agree with the majority, but I do agree the half-timbered *Rathaus* (Town Hall) is truly remarkable — well worth the trek on the orange part of the

route.

While not all half-timbered buildings come from the Middle Ages, it sure does feel that way; and what's a trek through the medieval without a visit to a castle? Burg Wendelstein is quite the formidable structure — and for some strange reason it appears more menacing in the bleak days of winter. Anyway, the 13th century castle is now a fine museum these days, as well as offering up an opportunity to experience the beauty of the [Rhön Mountains](#).

I'm not sure if it's a good idea to go hiking out on the Rhön in winter, so it might be best to save that for the warmer months of the year. Come in July, that's when Vacha's Summer Festival takes place, OK? No problem if you're not able to make that one, you can come for the *Kürbisfest* (Pumpkin Festival) in October, the Arts & Crafts Market in November, or the *Gemeindefest* in September instead.

Seems like the right kind of weather to hike along the Keltenpfad, a 17.8 km route in the footsteps of the Celts. Come see the Öchsenberg, a mountain that once housed a Celtic oppidum, or settlement — and it's now within a UNESCO Biosphere area.

And just when you think you're done, Vacha has something else up her sleeve. The Werra Bridge has been crossing people over the water since the Middle Ages, the pretty Vitus Fountain has probably seen it all since it's been here for 400 years, and there's even a Jewish Cemetery.

The choices truly are endless in Vacha.