

German Fairytale Route

Route 3 5 Stops

This nearly 400-mile [Fairytale road trip](#) follows the route of the Brothers Grimm—with a bit of a happier ending. You'll explore Sleeping Beauty's castle, UNESCO-worthy town squares, national parks, deep forests, and maybe even some of your favorite fictional characters. From Bremen to Hanau, this trip is one built for legends.



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Stop 1 on German Fairytale Route

Bremen Market Square and Old Town

Credit: Photo: Shutterstock/canadastock

Bremen's main attraction is the stunning UNESCO World Heritage Marktplatz, a standing testament to 600 years of history. Place yourself here, and you'll quickly spot the Bremen Roland, a statue of a sword-drawing knight signifying the town privileges of a medieval city, erected in 1404. Turn around to face the Weser Renaissance-era town hall, the only Rathaus in Europe to survive the Middle Ages unaltered or rebuilt.

Go inside the Rathaus, if you can: The hall's interior has model ships hanging from the ceiling to mark the city's historic role in maritime trade, and—down in the cellar—you'll find the oldest cask of wine in Germany, dating to 1635. Just outside the town square but worth the steps, you can easily walk to the 11th-century Bremen Cathedral.

Tip: Near the Bremen Roland, it's hard to miss the Bremen Stadtmusikanten, a bronze statue depicting the four-legged characters of the eponymous Grimm fairytale.

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Stop 2 on German Fairytale Route

Sababurg, the Sleeping Beauty Castle

Credit: Photo: Shutterstock/IUBII_BURIAK

Today, the “ruin” of the hill castle of Sababurg—aka the Sleeping Beauty Castle—combines a forested, ivy-covered, bucolic charm with absolute opulence and fairytale flair. Deep in the forested uplands of Reinhardswald, the structure protected traveling pilgrims as far back as the 1300s, and still does, in a way: It’s a hotel, about a 40-minute drive from Kassel.

Abandoned for centuries—the thorny overgrowth serving as inspiration for its Sleeping Beauty status—it was reimagined in the 1950s, with 16 rooms (all in the turrets) providing guests a chance to live out this Brothers Grimm favorite. Just try not to sleep in for 100 years.

Note: The castle is currently undergoing renovation; free tours of the exterior and the terrace are available on weekends.

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Stop 3 on German Fairytale Route

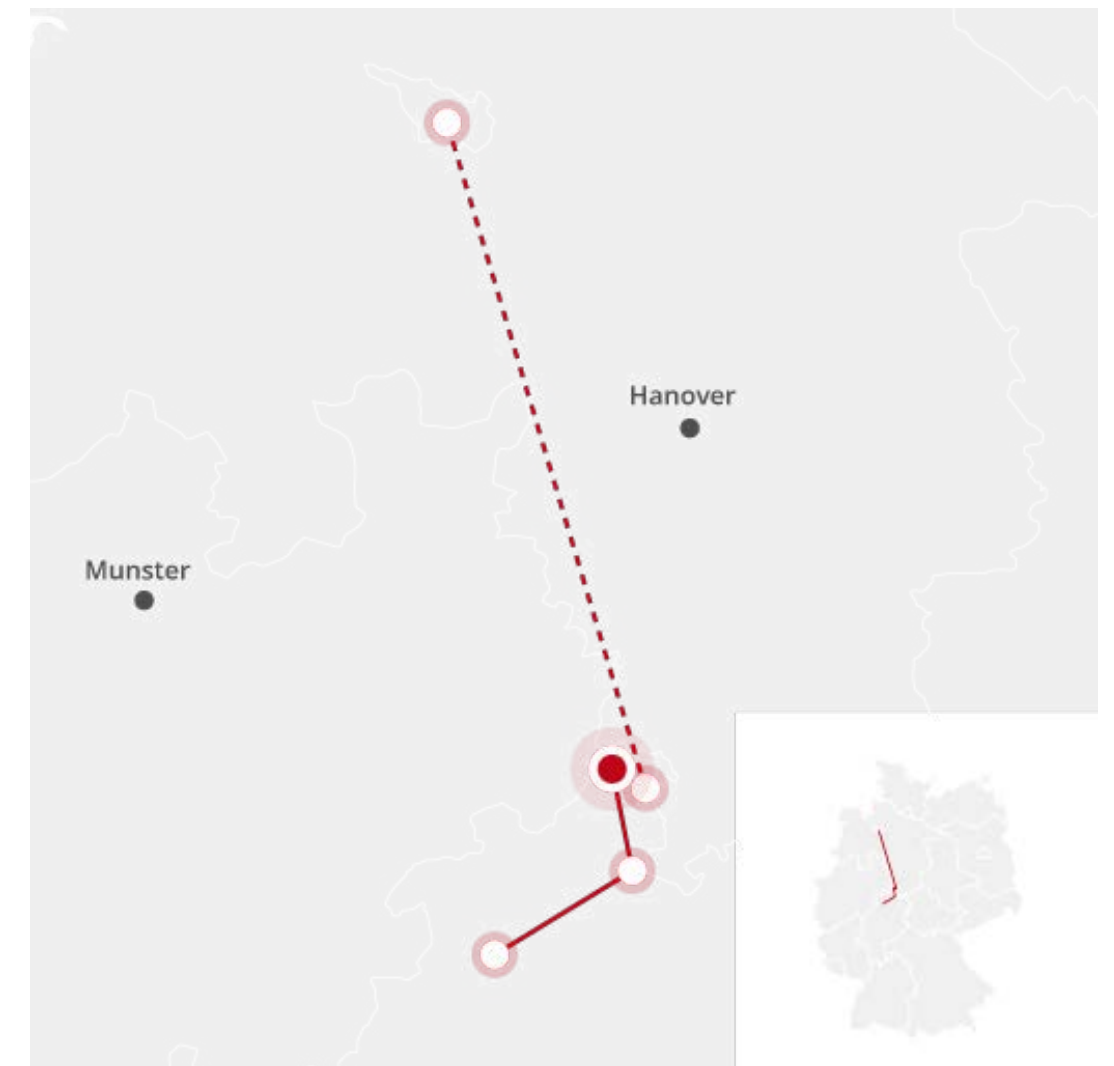
Trendelburg Castle

Credit: Photo: Shutterstock/IURII BURIK

The small-but-attractive town of Trendelburg seems dwarfed by its fairytale castle, perched high up on a lonely sandstone precipice. The fortress-style building—with a 125-foot tower, a pentagonal ring wall, a quartet of smaller circular towers, and the remains of a late Gothic chapel with a ribbed vault—was originally built in the 13th century, restored in the 15th century, and adapted again in the 17th century. It's one of the few remaining medieval structures in the region, located about 25 miles north of Kassel in Hesse.

Lucky for us, Trendelburg Castle now lives on as a hotel. It offers historically themed rooms, a wellness area with a sauna and massage room (located in the Rapunzel-esque tower), and serves as a convenient base for hiking and cycling tours across the Weser Highlands or on a day trip to Kassel.

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Stop 4 on German Fairytale Route

Grimmwelt Kassel

Credit: Photo: Shutterstock/Marc Venema

By far the best spot along the Fairytale Route for Brothers Grimm aficionados, this ultra-modern and imaginative museum explores their famous stories, of course, but also hosts exhibitions that go much deeper into their life and work—including their groundbreaking linguistic and cultural research and their involvement in German politics.

The museum's layout and design are totally innovative, constantly surprising, and highly interactive. Keep your eyes peeled, as art installations by renowned creators like Ai Weiwei, Alexej Tchernyi, and Ecke Bonk pop up without fanfare. To wrap up the afternoon, explore the museum's picturesque park and admire the views from the roof terrace.

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Stop 5 on German Fairytale Route

Kellerwald-Edersee National Park

Credit: Photo: © GNTB/Francesco Carovillano

Hessen's Kellerwald-Edersee National Park, found to the south of the shimmering Edersee Lake, is set deep in the low-lying Kellerwald Mountains. It's the verdant wonderland that inspired many Grimm tales, and today offers excellent hiking amidst UNESCO-protected beech forest—the last of its kind in Central Europe—picturesque valleys, bubbling streams, and scenic open meadows.

The park is best explored via any of the 20 official circular hiking trails, most of which can be completed in half a day. Regional hiking trails pass through as well—look to Kellerwaldsteig, Urwaldsteig Edersee, and Ederhöhenweg if you're up for a longer trek.

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