

German Wine Route

Route 8 5 Stops

Germany's wine-making history goes back thousands of years, and the fact that there are 13 distinct wine regions in the country mean your options for a glass broaden far beyond the flagship Riesling. Suffice it to say, on the [German Wine Route](#) your oeno-knowledge will deepen considerably. It's a compact 52 miles, but it packs in museums dedicated entirely to wine, barrels big enough to get lost in, castles you will get lost in, and hundreds of chances to put your lips to a fresh varietal you might just fall in love with. Here's where your palate will take you.



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Stop 1 on German Wine Route

The Dürkheim Barrel, Bad

Photo: Shutterstock/Ivan Vasulyev

This remarkable landmark—known as the “Heart of the German Wine Route”—was built in 1934 by Fritz Keller, a cooper and vintner who created the giant barrel from 178 boards of wood around 50 feet in length. With a diameter of some 45 feet, the barrel could potentially hold 1.7 million liters of wine—but instead it hosts a wine bar and restaurant serving a range of local and German wines and typical Palatinate cuisine. There’s also a rustic wine cellar with room for around 150 additional guests.

Officially the world’s largest wine barrel, it’s located at the edge of Bad Dürkheim’s handsome town square (Brühlwiesen), where the world’s largest wine festival, the Wurstmarkt, takes place every September. Across nine days, 600,000 visitors gather to taste, sniff, swish, and take in an experience that’s been running strong for nearly 600 years.

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Stop 2 on German Wine Route

Museum of Wine Culture, Deidesheim

Photo: Shutterstock/Markus Oblander

Deidesheim's Museum of Wine Culture opened in 1986 and has become one of the most popular stops along the German Wine Route. The exhibition—which takes up three floors in the historic town hall—is impressively comprehensive and detailed, explaining the basic processes of wine production but also the various and subtle ways wine has become integrated into our societies, via everything from medicine and art to economy and politics.

Exhibits include wine-drinking vessels and bottles from Roman times to the present day, historic writings on viticulture, plus equipment and objects used in different types of wine cultivation. Afterwards, head to the Villa Im Paradies restaurant, which serves regional cuisine and plenty of local bottles.

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Stop 3 on German Wine Route

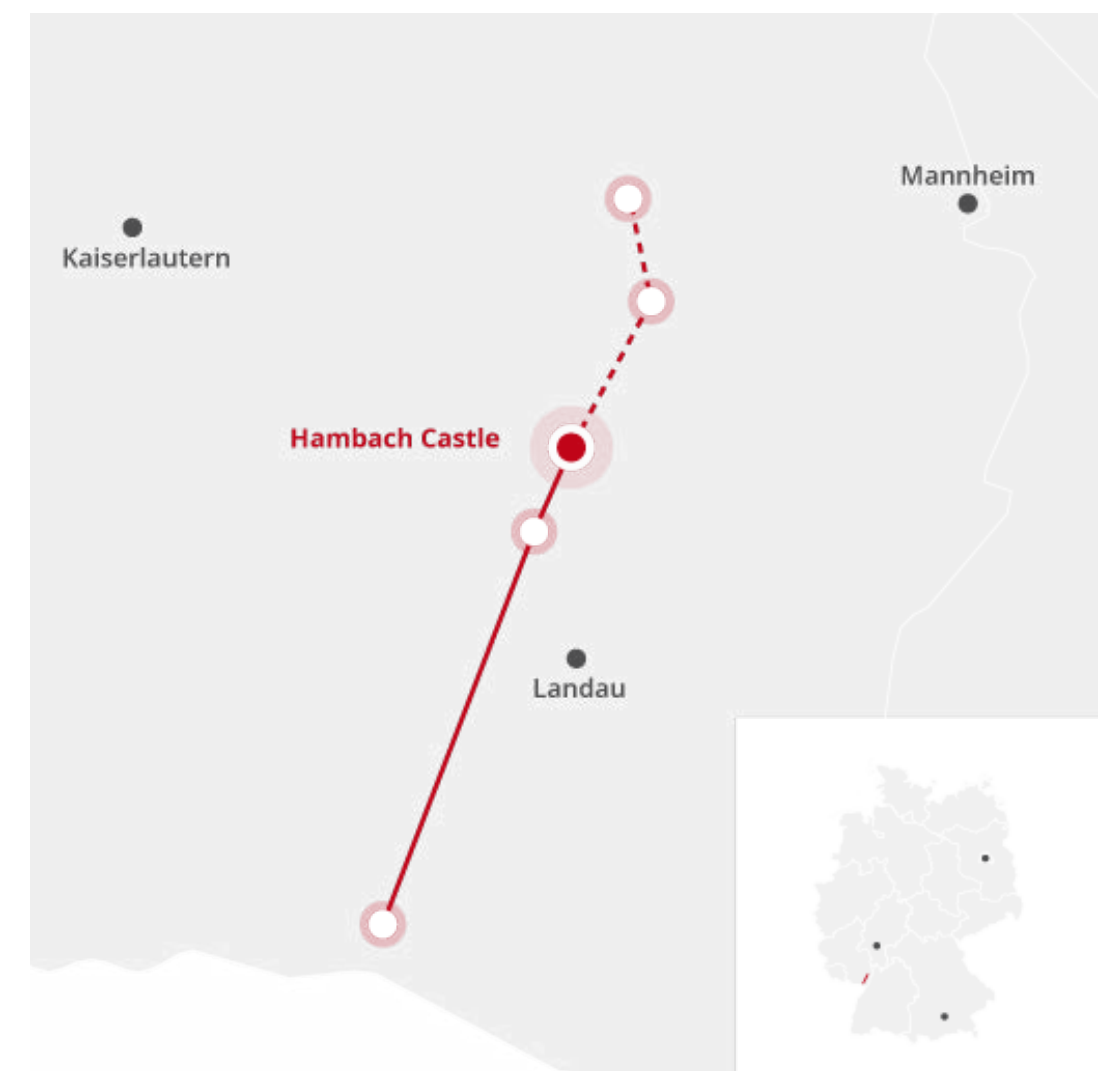
Hambach Castle

Photo: Francesco Carovillano / GNTB

In 1832, some 30,000 souls marched up the mountain path to Hambach Castle, raised black, red, and gold flags (the prototype for the German flag today), and expressed their progressive demands for unity, liberty, and democracy via speeches and song. The event is now seen as one of the key moments in the foundation of German democracy.

A permanent exhibition—“Hinauf, hinauf zum Schloss!”, which translates as “Up, up to the castle!”—provides the broader context of the event and outlines the subsequent evolution of democracy in Germany. The castle also offers a great selection of wines in its Restaurant 1832, which was designed by famous Swiss architect Max Dudler. Dine on one of the terraces for memorable views, and check the website for occasional events.

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Stop 4 on German Wine Route

Villa Ludwigshöhe

Photo: Martin Hoch / Globe Session

The stunning Villa Ludwigshöhe can be found at the edge of the Palatinate Forest just west of Edenkoben. It was built between 1846 to 1852 by architect Friedrich Wilhelm von Gärtner for King Ludwig I, who used it mainly as a summer residence.

Constructed in classicist style, its tasteful interior features wooden mosaic floors, painted murals and ceiling, and historic family portraits and furniture from the Palais Leuchtenberg in Munich. Since 1980, part of the first floor has hosted a permanent exhibition of works by Bavarian Impressionist painter Max Slevogt, which is supplemented by regular special exhibitions and classical concerts in the historic concert hall. There's also a pleasant café, where you can enjoy some local wines along with stellar views of the surrounding Italianate landscape of vineyards and groves.

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Stop 5 on German Wine Route

German Wine Gate, Schweigen-Rechtenbach

Photo: Shutterstock/Juergen Faelchle

The German Wine Gate (Deutsches Weintor) has been a stalwart of the local wine industry since 1936—it also marks the southern end of the German Wine Route. Set in Schweigen-Rechtenbach—the southernmost wine town of the Pfalz—the gate serves as a counterpoint to the House of the German Wine Route, 52 miles north in Bockenheim.

The 59-foot-high structure was built by Joseph Peter in neoclassical style, mainly from timber but with pink sandstone on the façade. As well as a viewing platform, the gate has a popular restaurant operated by the local wine growers' association, and there's also a "wine education path" (Weinlehrpfad) in the town that traces the history of viticulture from Roman times to the present day, plus plenty of surrounding vineyards to explore.

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