

Family Day Trips



30+ German Adventures
within 3 hours of
Wiesbaden, Mainz &
Frankfurt

In the early 13th century, Mainz was home to a Roman stronghold. The Main and Rhine Rivers made Mainz a strategic point for Roman defense. Today, evidence of the Roman Empire's strength can still be seen.

Ancient Ruins and Roman History



Mainz Roman Ruins: Mainz has a Roman Boat Museum which has remnants from ships pulled from the Rhine River, as well as reconstructions of those ships. Also in Mainz, underneath a shopping mall are the ruins of a Roman temple to the Egyptian God, Isis. Both these museums are free of charge.
<http://www.mainz.de/WGAPublisher/online/html/default/mkuz-5t3hsm.en.html>

Trier Roman Ruins: Trier has many well preserved roman sites to explore. The Black Gate is a typical Roman construction and is connected to a very well done museum. Also in Trier: the Ruins of Roman Imperial Baths, and an amphitheater. <http://www.trier-info.de/english/index>

Saalburg Roman Fort- Step back into Roman times at this reconstructed Roman fort. Areas have been staged with archeological items and mannequins to show what life was like for Roman soldiers guarding the castle.
<http://www.saalburgmuseum.de/>

Colonge Roman Museum- This museum is home to many Roman Mosaic floors, and relics found locally. Cologne also has a huge, beautiful cathedral, a chocolate factory to tour, and many museums. You could easily take multiple day trips to this city and still not see all there is to see.
<http://www.museenkoeln.de/homepage/default.asp?s=169>



The Middle Ages, Castles and Palaces

Auerbach Castle and Knights Banquet- If you thought Medieval Times back in the states was cool, you'll be blown away by Auerbach. A beautiful castle, medieval festivals, jousting, and amazing food. Every Sunday, a family dinner is held at 2 pm, you can reserve tickets online.

http://www.rittermahle.eu/index.cfm/kat_id/117/pkkat_id/225

Wertheim- This cute town has narrow cobblestone roads, with a castle in the center of town. It is still very much a medieval village. You can also visit the Abbey and many museums: a paper mill, a glass making museum, and a museum centered on rural living.

<http://www.tourismus-wertheim.de/startseite.html>

Oppenheim Altstadt- Oppenheim is worth the day trip. This town is home to castle ruins, and many beautiful buildings, but the most interesting thing about this town is what is under it. Explore an underground labyrinth and an Ossuary with the remains of 20,000 people. At the time ceme-

teries in the area were reused, so when they dug a new grave, any remains found were placed underground; the people laid to rest in the Ossuary are likely from the 16th and 17th century.

<http://www.stadt-oppenheim.de/>



Oppenheim

Just go for a drive!

Germany has too many castles to list here! I've picked some of my favorites to share with you, but I strongly suggest spending a day just exploring the area. If you get on any of the Autobahns here, you'll notice brown signs up and down the road. We spent a day just getting off at the sign and checking out the castles and other historic sites! You can easily see 2-4 within a 45 minute drive in any direction, if you just go looking for the brown signs!

Stolzenfels Castle- This castle is south of Koblenz, and is up on the hill overlooking the river. It is a 19th century fairy tale palace which you can tour. It's stunning!

<http://www.koblenz-touristik.de/en/places-of-interest/buildings-and-places/schloss-stolzenfels.html>

Schwetzingen Palace- Versailles may be too far away for a day trip, but the beautifully landscaped gardens of Schwetzingen Palace are a smaller taste of 19th century landscaping, close to home. Guided tours of the Palace are available in English on Saturdays.

<http://www.schloss-schwetzingen.de/en/>

Ronneburg Castle- This is my favorite castle to take the children to. Once inside, you are free to explore independently, climb the towers and explore the passage ways in this wonderfully preserved medieval castle. At the castle is also a restaurant and a falconry. In the summer, they often have festivals and renaissance fairs on the grounds.

<http://www.burg-ronneburg.de/>

Burg Eltz- Not only is this castle stunning, it's also in the middle of a beautiful forest. To get to the castle tour, you'll follow a nature path through the trees. This Castle has stayed within the same family for centuries, and escaped all wars unscathed.

<http://burg-eltz.de/>

Even More Local Castles and Palaces



Stolzenfels



Idstein

When visiting a German Village, the one thing I always do before leaving home is check the hours of the Tourist office. Most are small enough that you don't really need to know where you are going. As you enter the town, follow the signs to the "Aldstadt" and look for the blue Public Parking signs. The Tourist Office is almost always in the town center square, dead center of the Aldstadt. They'll have maps, information and brochures in English to help you get the most out of your time in the Village.

Hanau- This cute half-timbered town is the birthplace of the Grimm Brothers. There is a statue to the brothers in the town square.

The town is also home to Philippsruh Castle, an 18th century baroque style palace constructed by Napoleon III.

<http://www.hanau.de/>

Idstein- This cute half-timbered town is only 30 minutes from Wiesbaden and is the perfect place to spend a day. They are famous for their witches' tower, which you can climb for free. Pick up the key from the tourist office- make sure to check their hours before you leave home.

<http://www.idstein.de/>

Rothenburg ob der Tauber- This town is the epitome of the fairy tale German Village. It is a walled, half-timbered town. You can find German keepsakes, traditional restaurants and beautiful buildings. My favorite part of this town is the torture museum- full of interesting and frightening artifacts. <http://www.rothenburg.de/index.php?get=121>

"Typical" German Villages

Worms- This city is famous as the site of the tribunal against Martin Luther. You can not visit the location of the trial, but there is a beautiful memorial for Martin Luther and the trial. In the city is also a huge basilica and an old Jewish cemetery.

<http://www.worms.de/englisch/tourismus/>

Cochem- This town is adorable. To get there, you have to follow a narrow winding road, but as soon as you pop over the top of the mountain, you'll see a castle up on the hill. You can only visit the castle on a group tour, but they do offer it in multiple languages and have English information sheets. The tour itself is very child friendly and they go out of the way to make sure the children are having fun.

<http://www.cochem.de>

Nurnberg- Hitler considered Nürnberg the most German of all cities, so this city is full of WWII museums and sites. The Nazi Documentation Center/Congress Hall has a permanent exhibition that discusses the cause and consequences of National Socialism called "Fascination and Terror". None of the exhibits are in English, but are still worth a visit.
<http://museums.nuremberg.de/documentation-centre/>

Oberhausen Bunker Museum- This museum is in a repurposed WWII bunker under the civic center. There is exhibition of the air war over the Ruhr area and the Nazi conquest. This museum is only open Wednesdays and Sundays, and is free. In Oberhausen is also the largest shopping mall in Europe (centero), Sea Life aquarium, and an amusement park.
http://www.bunkermuseum-oberhausen.de/Bunkermuseum_Oberhausen/Das_Bunkermuseum.html

Buchenwald Concentration Camp Memorial- This memorial outside Weimar is home to the remains of the prison camp, the SS area, a memorial, and the burial of the Soviet Special Camp #2. Special exhibitions explore the history of the site.
<http://www.buchenwald.de/465/>

Military History: The World Wars

I almost left these sites off the list, because War isn't exactly the most family friendly topic. However, these are too important to miss, and we need to bear history to the painful past as a way to remember those lost.

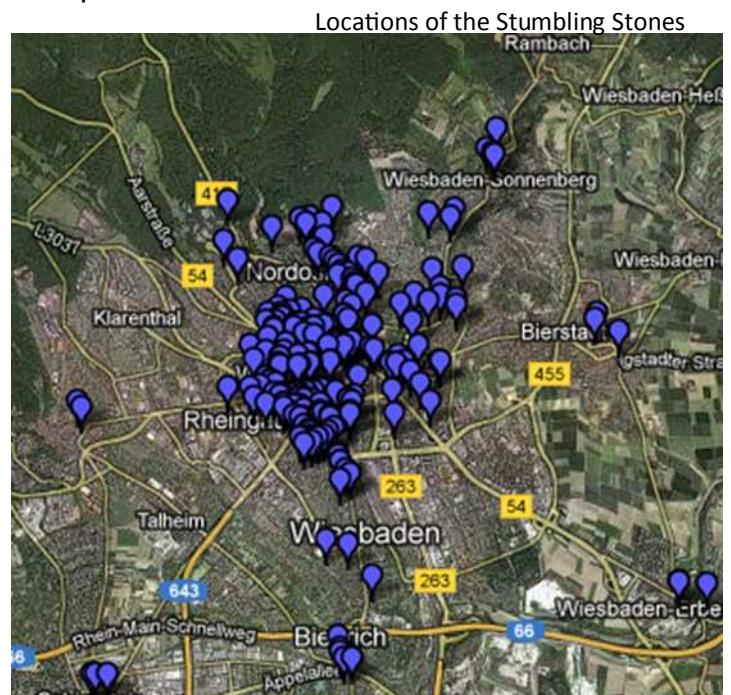
Buchenwald is the camp where the author Elie Wiesel was held until it was liberated in 1945. It is estimated that over 65,000 people lost their lives there.

Bastogne- See the site of the Battle of the Bulge during WWII. War museums, memorials and cemeteries make this a historical site to not miss. The drive is 3 hours from Wiesbaden, and worthy of an overnight weekend stay for any military history buff.
http://www.bastogne-tourisme.be/bastogne_en/homepage

Stumbling Stones- In Wiesbaden are small bronze plaques in the ground that serve as a reminder of those whose lives were changed by the Nazis during WWII. Names, dates, and the location they were removed to are written on these small plaques.

<http://www.am-spiegelgasse.de/en/history-and-commemoration/>

Locations of Wiesbaden Stumbling Stones: <http://www.am-spiegelgasse.de/wp-content/html/stolpersteine/>



Outdoors and Nature Centered Activities



Barfußpfad Bad Sobernheim

This Barefoot Park is meant to be enjoyed without shoes. The well-maintained paths have different textures to walk on, including mud pits, streams, and various balancing beams. There is also a rope across a river, and suspension rope bridges. I've taken even my little kids here, and this is their favorite German park.

<http://www.barfusspark.info/parks/sobernheim.htm>

Biosphärenhaus Pfälzerwald

This park has a 270 meter long tree top trail, 18 to 35 meters above the ground. They also have a rope bridge adventure trail, a water trail and a long slide. It's a great place for all ages to spend a summer day learning about nature.

<http://www.biosphaerenhaus.de/en/baumwipfelpfad.php>

Mainz Volkspark- This park has a water feature for small children to play in (bring swim-

suits!), a zip line, a large playground, a children's train, and lots of open spaces for a picnic. This park is close by, and a wonderful way to spend a hot afternoon. <http://www.mainz.de/WGAPublisher/online/html/default/nhthn-6yncyr.de.html>

Wiesbaden Kletterwald- Do you like to climb trees? In this park, you'll get a harness and climb to the top on a ropes course. Kids ages 4–6 can climb the smaller Jungle Course, and kids older than 6 can enjoy the high rope course. This park is great for adults too!

<http://www.kletterwald-neroberg.de>

Appel-Happel- This little farm has pick your own apples and pears, as well as a small farm stand where you can purchase baked goods and fruit wines. It's a fantastic way to spend the day with your family, and save some money on your produce. (U-Pick August-October, Fruit stand year around, call for hours)

<http://www.appel-happel.de/>



Germany has some of the best, and most unique outdoor parks in the world. So pack a picnic lunch and spend the day in any one of these beautiful parks. Head to the barefoot park to get your feet dirty! The Tree course and Biosphere are perfect for thrill seekers. The fresh German air will do you good!

Fun and Educational Museums

Speyer Technical Museum- This museum is home to multiple aircraft and helicopters to see and to climb in. Some even have long slides coming from them! Inside the museum, you'll see spacecraft, trains and automobiles. If it's a moveable machine, this museum has it.
<http://speyer.technik-museum.de/en>

Sinsheim Auto and Technic Museum- This museum is mainly focused on cars of every type! They have many popular American vintage cars, as well as famous European racing cars.
<http://sinsheim.technik-museum.de/en>

Sea Life (multiple locations- closest are Spyer and Oberhausen)- Sea Life is an aquarium- they have fish, sharks, jellyfish and octopus.
<http://www.visitsealife.com/Speyer/>

These museums are some of my favorite in the local area. Parking and Public Restrooms are often free and plentiful at them, which makes for a fantastic day. When paying for admission, the word for an adult is "Erwachsenen" and child is "Kinder." Many museums have family or group tickets at a discounted rate, don't be afraid to ask!

