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# 67 kilometres of world heritage along the Rhine

UNESCO World Heritage Site „Upper Middle Rhine Valley“ • *From Bingen and Rudesheim to Koblenz*



Unesco-Welterbe  
Oberes Mittelrheintal





### Our valley is wild and romantic

„What a mighty force that must have been and what an age it must have taken before the waters broke through,“ said Goethe, and he was right. The course of the Rhine we see today has developed over the past 2.5 million years: already diminished by exposure to the weather and by natural erosion, the Rhenish Massif, which was created from the deposits of a long-gone primordial ocean, was forced upwards by the collision of the African and the Eurasian plates to form the Rhenish Slate Range. In order to continue to channel its way northwards, the Rhine needed to match this tectonic uplift with deep vertical erosion and thus the gorge was formed.

This wild, rugged landscape, with its crags and steep slopes, the river untamed and unbending to human will, became the aesthetic ideal for a



new generation of poets and thinkers, the Rhine Romantics. Clemens Brentano, Achim von Arnim, Lord Byron, Victor Hugo and William Turner gave expression to their enthusiasm for the Rhine in poems, songs and paintings. It is thanks to them that the Loreley acquired the enduring fame which has made it and the surrounding area probably the most recognised landmarks of the Middle Rhine.

### Our history is rooted in the Age of Chivalry

Nowhere else do such imposing fortifications, castles, and ruins stand watch over steep and craggy slopes as in the Upper Middle Rhine Valley, a striking testament to the historical significance of the Rhine Valley as a trade route between North and South. Traders and merchants, kings, emperors and princes of the Church: they all had to travel through the eye of the needle, the Upper Middle Rhine Valley. Territorial leaders each built their own outpost on the Rhine so that they could plunder their share of the booty as it passed by and to secure their property from belligerent neighbours. Strategically placed fortifications and castles crown the cliffs of the Rhine's middle terraces and bear impressive witness to mediaeval power.

Important towns such as Bacharach, Kaub, Oberwesel and Braubach grew up at the same time. Strung like pearls along the length of the mighty Rhine, their architecture still reflects the glory and wealth of the past. The ancient centres of these originally mediaeval settlements, be they big or small, exert their own particular charm, with picturesque market squares, splendid town halls, outstanding churches, splashing fountains and half-timbered architecture. Higher still there are small inviting towns, romantically tucked away in the many side valleys of the Rhine or the foothills of the Taunus and Hunsrück mountains offering magnificent views of the valley and of the castles.

### Our natural world is full of delights

Around a third of all of Germany's animal and plant species are found in the Upper Middle Rhine Valley. There are numerous zoological treasures in this diversity. The particular topography of the Upper Middle Rhine Valley with its steep sides both bare and covered with vegetation, high level plateaux, and shady and sunny slopes, all with their own microclimates, provides ideal niches for flora and fauna.

Even heat-loving animals and plants, which are otherwise found in the Mediterranean area or on the steppes of south-eastern Europe feel at home here. It is hardly surprising then that the Dörscheider Heath nature reserve provides a habitat for around 600 different types of butterfly and moth, including the cream spot tiger moth and the sail swallowtail; such diversity is thought to be unique in Europe.

Similarly unique is the *iberis boppardensis*, a pale-pink to white member of the crucifer family of plants, which is native only to the Bopparder Hamm nature reserve, a piece of land encircled by a wide loop of the Rhine and which again commands magnificent views.

The Western Green Lizard, on the other hand, can be found almost anywhere in the Upper Middle Rhine Valley wherever the semi-open shrubland on the steep slopes or a dry-stone wall offers a space to bask in the sun. The Green Lizard is largest, most beautiful and at the same time rarest lizard in the area.





**Our wine is made from the Riesling grape / our wines are legendary**

Small but perfectly formed. Wine is grown over 1155 hectares in the Upper Middle Rhine Valley world heritage site where four wine-growing regions come together: in the South small sections of Rheinhessen, Nahe and Rheingau abut the Middle Rhine wine-growing area which extends northwards almost as far as Bonn.

Almost all our vines grow on vertiginous slopes on the mineral-rich Rhenish slate. The Riesling grape is grown in around 70% of the vineyards on the Middle Rhine. The star among German grape varieties, it likes the sunny slate slopes, where it has the ideal conditions for a special terroir, its very own calling card. All the Middle Rhine

Rieslings have one thing in common: they are outstanding full-bodied wines with a crisp acidity and a fine bouquet.

Wine-growing has been an important source of income for the inhabitants of the Middle Rhine for centuries and a major factor in shaping the landscape. Some of the vineyards have been owned by the same family for hundreds of years. Working on the steep slopes, sometimes at an 60% incline, can be extremely arduous (particularly in the summer months) and demands exceptional devotion to wine-making and to the region. Thanks to the many industrious vineyard workers, we can enjoy not only unusually good Riesling, but also the beauty of our region in a wine glass.



**Our cultural landscape is diverse, yet unmistakably of the Middle Rhine**

Superb natural landscapes and a multi-faceted culture are two sides of the Upper Middle Rhine Valley world heritage site.

With its strategic position in Europe, it has seen many cultures and peoples pass through over the ages and they have left their footprints. For example, some place names can be traced back to the Celts.

The Romans also brought their culture and, above all, their wine, which was grown on terraces on the steep slopes, and laid the foundation for the unique cultural landscape of the Middle Rhine. In mediaeval times, the region thrived at the heart of the Holy Roman Empire to which numerous castles, ruins, market squares, half-timbered houses and churches testify as stone-built witnesses of the past.



The wars in the 17th and 18th centuries made the Upper Middle Rhine Valley the key setting for the struggle between France and the German Reich for control of the Rhine. This rich history can still be experienced through countless monuments. The „German“ Rhine became a symbol of national unity and greatness. This is exemplified by

the Deutsche Eck, where Kaiser Wilhelm proudly surveyed his unified empire.

Later, it was the poets and thinkers of the Rhine Romanticism and the Vormärz (Age of Metternich) movements who declared the Valley of the Loreley the command centre of the creative and revolutionary spirit of Germany and Europe. It comes therefore as no surprise that the „Lied der Deutschen“, the German national anthem, was



first heard in the Middle Rhine, more precisely in Oberwesel, where it was struck up by none other than Hoffmann von Fallersleben, who wrote the poem on which it is based.





## Come and experience the fascination of the Upper Middle Rhine Valley

Our rich natural and cultural landscape is unique in its diversity and beauty. This is why in 2002, UNESCO decided to confer world heritage status on the Upper Middle Rhine Valley, deeming it worthy of protection by all humanity. We are very proud of this status and want to share it with you!

- Our certified „RheinSteig“ and „RheinBurgen Weg“ hiking trails guide you to the most enchanting views and the most romantic panoramas in the Upper Middle Rhine Valley world heritage site, past a host of noble castles, steeply sloping vineyards, quiet forests and craggy cliffs – what more could nature offer?
- If you would like to discover the Upper Middle Rhine Valley world heritage site under expert guidance, we recommend our world heritage guides. Their „Dem Erbe auf der Spur – unterwegs am Mittelrhein“ [„Tracing our heritage



– travelling around the Middle Rhine“] programme introduces the special features of the region to you.

- Attention all adventure lovers! Our **three via ferratas** are sure to get your adrenaline pumping: the Alpine character of the Oelsbergsteig at Oberwesel, the Mittelrheinklettersteig at Boppard and the Rabenacksteig at St. Goarshausen would appeal only to vertigo-free hikers.



- Visitors who prefer a leisurely cycle ride can take the **Rhine Cycle Path** to a host of natural and cultural delights. „Bank hop“ by boat and ferry to move quickly from one side of the river to the other.



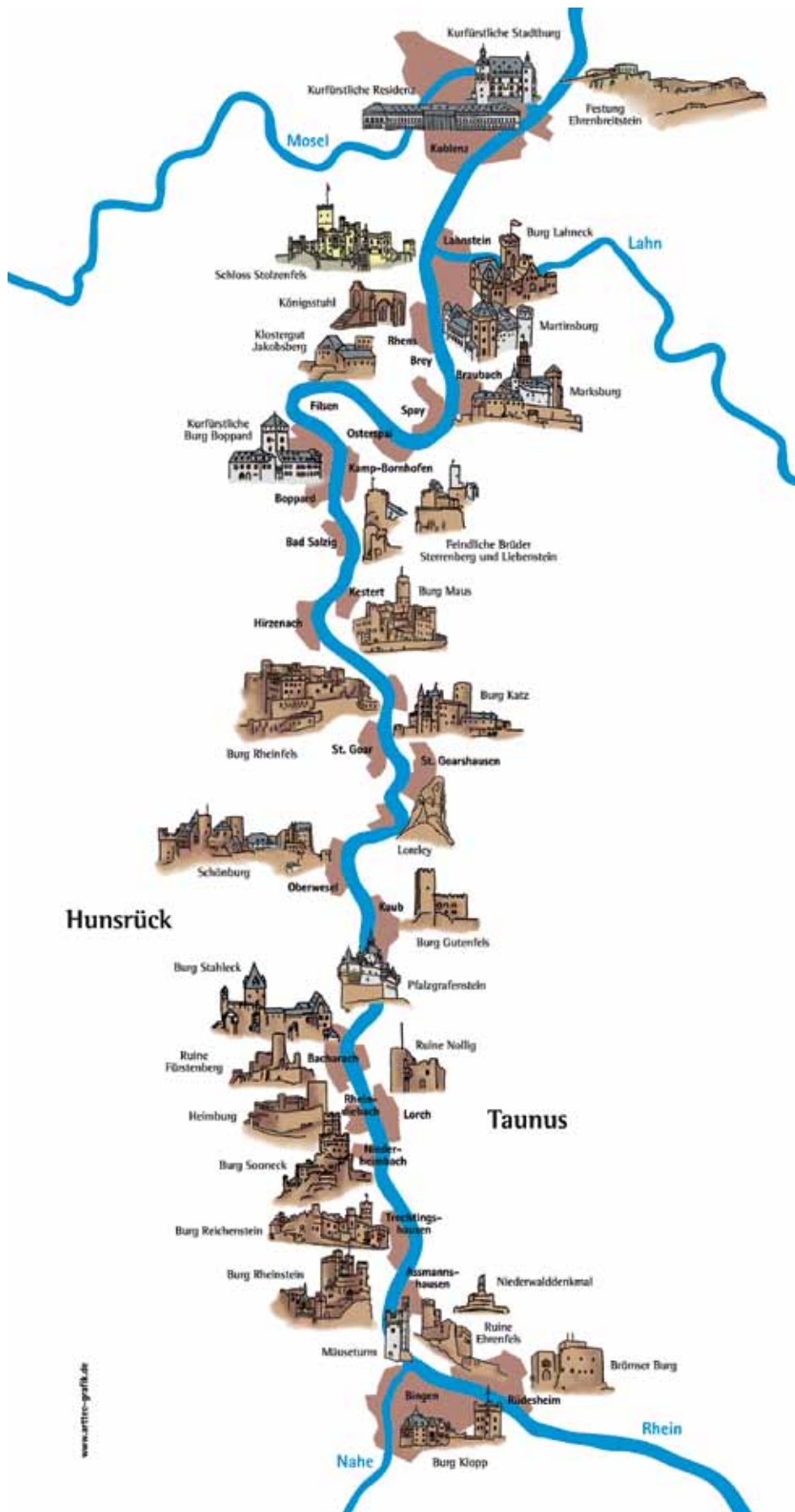
- The „Weisse Flotte“ (White Fleet) river boats offer a very special way to experience the landscape. Gently, as if they were painted, the views of castles, terraced vineyards and historic towns and villages seem to glide past the gaze of the observer, and invite those on-board to set down on land and explore.
- If you want your trip through the Upper Middle Rhine Valley world heritage site to include lovingly prepared food, welcoming service, comfortable beds and helpful information, take a break or stop over at our inns and hotels. The kitchens and cellars are full of culinary delights from the Rhine valley and its hills. Enjoy the taste of the region.

- For more information please see the **World Heritage Atlas**. Comprehensive, yet compact, it is the essential guide to your trip to the Upper Middle Rhine Valley world heritage site.

Also take a look at our informative internet portal [www.welterbe-mittelrhein.de](http://www.welterbe-mittelrhein.de) where you will find all the official pages for the Upper Middle Rhine Valley world heritage site and in the meantime you can use the innovative navigation system to take a virtual trip on the Rhine.

We look forward to seeing you!





**Legal**

**Herausgeber:**

Romantischer Rhein Tourismus GmbH  
 Loreley Besucherzentrum  
 56346 St. Goarshausen  
 Tel.: 0 67 71 95 93 80  
 Fax 0 67 71 95 93 8-14  
 info@romantischer-rhein.de  
[www.romantischer-rhein.de](http://www.romantischer-rhein.de)

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