

# Rhineland-Palatinate & Saarland



The state of Rhineland-Palatinate (Rheinland-Pfalz), patched together by the French after WWII, united historically disparate bits of Bavaria, Hesse and Prussia that had only one thing in common – the Rhine (Rhein). The river meanders for 1390km from the Swiss Alps to Rotterdam, but nowhere else has it shaped the land and its people more profoundly than along the 290km stretch traversing Rhineland-Palatinate.

Some of Europe's largest corporations dominate the Rhine banks south of Mainz, the state capital. But along here there's also a grand legacy of the Middle Ages: the magnificent Romanesque cathedrals of Mainz, Worms and Speyer. Northwest of Mainz is the river's most picturesque stretch, the storied Romantic Rhine, whose vine-clad slopes, medieval hilltop castles and snug wine villages have drawn artists and tourists since the early 19th century.

Most of Germany's wine is grown in Rhineland-Palatinate's six wine regions: the Ahr Valley, Moselle-Saar-Ruwer, Middle Rhine, Nahe, Rheinhessen and, famed for its German Wine Road, the Rheinpfalz. The region's wonderful wines can all be sampled in a multitude of ambience-laden wine taverns. The local people's *joie de vivre* finds expression in the many town and village wine festivals, held from August to October.

Tiny Saarland, in the southwest, was once a centre for heavy industry but these days it's better known for Saarbrücken's Frenchified urbane charms, and its verdant forests and fields.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- **Riverine Scenery** Cruise, cycle or ramble along the castle-studded Romantic Rhine (p483) between Koblenz and Bingen
- **Architectural Stunners** Marvel at the Romanesque cathedrals in Mainz (p467), Worms (p472) and Speyer (p474)
- **Roman Relics** Explore the remarkable ruins of Roman Trier (p497)
- **Romantic Bargain** Dream about knights and damsels – in your bunk and over a muesli breakfast – at the DJH Burg Stahleck hostel (p492) in Bacharach
- **Thrill Ride** Take a high-speed spin around the Nürburgring race track (p482)
- **Cultural Moment** Listen to jazz at the Saarland's historic Völklinger Hütte ironworks (p508) in Völklingen

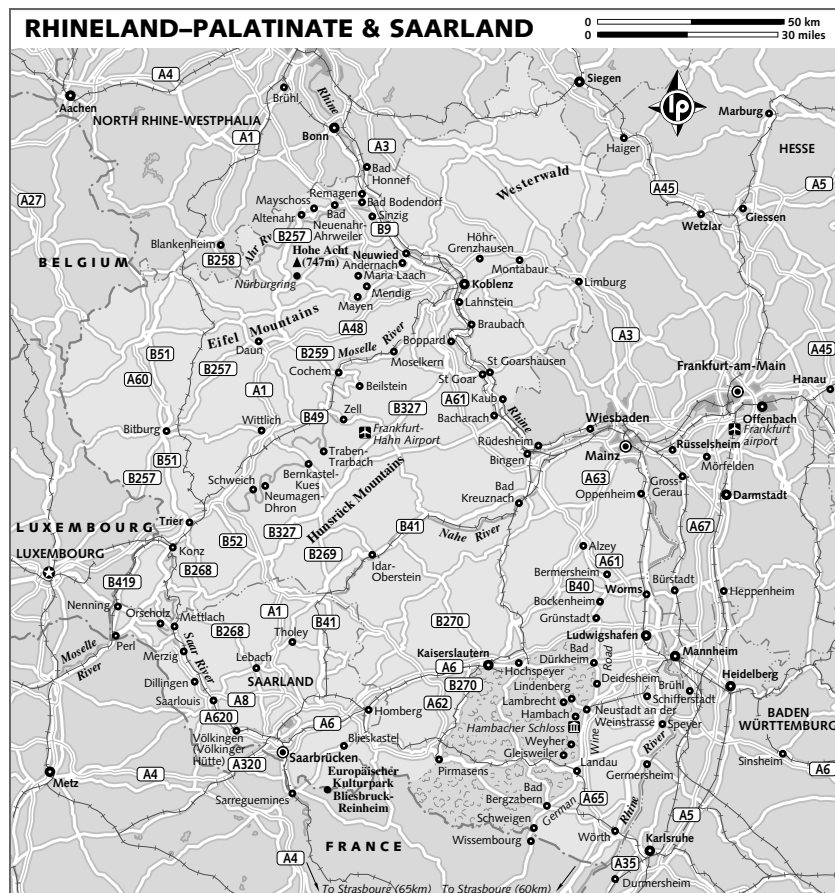


■ RHINELAND-PALATINATE POPULATION: 4 MILLION

■ RHINELAND-PALATINATE AREA: 19,853 SQ KM

■ SAARLAND POPULATION: 1.06 MILLION

■ SAARLAND AREA: 2569 SQ KM



## Accommodation

Accommodation is scarce and most expensive in September and October (especially on the weekends), when visitors are attracted by the grape harvest, the many village wine festivals and the red and gold tones of the changing autumn leaves. Also busy are May and June, with their spring weather and long days; August, also a time of wine festivals; and, in some locales, from late November to late December (especially weekends), when Christmas markets take place. During high season, some places enforce a two-night minimum stay.

## Getting There & Away

People complain that **Frankfurt-Hahn Airport** (☎ 06543-509 200; www.hahn-airport.de), a Ryanair

hub, is misleadingly named because it's nowhere near Frankfurt, and they have a point. But it is near many of the cities and towns covered in this chapter and is linked by bus to destinations including Bernkastel-Kues (€8, 30 minutes, two or three daily Monday to Friday), Bingen (€8.90, one hour, three daily), Idar-Oberstein (€5.60, 50 minutes, five daily Monday to Friday, two or three Saturday and Sunday), Koblenz (Bus €10; €12.30, 65 minutes, six daily), Mainz (€10.50, 70 minutes, 11 times daily), Traben-Trarbach (€6, 25 minutes, twice daily Monday to Saturday), Trier (€12, 80 minutes, seven daily) and Saarbrücken (€15, six daily).

The *real* Frankfurt airport (p524) is also a good option, especially if you're headed

by public transport to places such as Mainz, Worms, Speyer, the German Wine Road (be prepared to transfer a few times) and some of the Romantic Rhine villages, especially right-bank ones served by direct trains from Wiesbaden.

## Getting Around

With the Rheinland-Pfalz-Ticket (RP-Ticket; €23), up to five adults (or parents or grandparents with an unlimited number of their own children or grandchildren) can take any regional train (RE, IRE, RB and S-Bahn), tram, intercity bus or local bus anywhere within Rhineland-Palatinate and the Saarland for a full day – an unbeatable price for environmentally friendly transportation!

The ticket also lets you take the train along the right bank of the Rhine between Wiesbaden and St Goarshausen (this bit of track is officially in Hesse) and as far afield as Bonn, Mannheim, Karlsruhe and Wissembourg in the French region of Alsace. The RP-Ticket, valid from 9am to 3am Monday to Friday and all day long on Saturdays. Sundays and holidays, is available from train station ticket machines, at local public transport offices and on buses.

## RHINE-HESSE & PALATINATE

### MAINZ

☎ 06131 / pop 185,500

Mainz, the capital of Rhineland-Palatinate, is a lively locale thanks to its sizable university, a large media presence and a certain savoir-vivre whose origins go back to Napoleon's occupation (1798–1814). Strolling along the Rhine and sampling local wines in a half-timbered Altstadt (old town) tavern are as much a part of any Mainz visit as viewing the fabulous Dom, Chagall's ethereal windows in the St-Stephan-Kirche (St Stephen's Church) or the first printed Bibles in the Gutenberg Museum.

The Romans were the first to take advantage of Mainz' strategic location at the confluence of the Main and Rhine Rivers. In 12 BC, under Emperor Augustus, they founded a military camp called Moguntiacum as a base for the invasion of Germania. After the Romans, Mainz took a 250-year nap before being

awoken by English missionary St Boniface, who established an archbishopric here in AD 746. In the 15th century, native son Johannes Gutenberg ushered in the information age by perfecting moveable type (see boxed text, p470).

## Orientation

The mostly pedestrianised Altstadt is centred on the Dom (cathedral) and the adjacent Marktplatz (Domplatz), which are 1km east of the Hauptbahnhof (central train station). Pedestrians-only thoroughfares include east-west Ludwigsstrasse and north-south Augustinerstrasse.

## Information

**ConAction Internetcafé** (Grosse Bleiche 25; per 30/60min €1/1.70; ☎ 24hr)

**Eco-Express** (Parcusstrasse 12; ☎ 6am-11pm except Sun & holidays) Laundry.

**Gutenberg Buchhandlung** (☎ 270 330; Grosse Bleiche 27-31) Bookshop.

**Internet Center** (Bahnhofstrasse 11; per hr €1.50; ☎ 9am-11pm) There are several other internet cafés right nearby.

**Post office** (Bahnhofstrasse 2) Has an ATM.

**Reisebank** Currency exchange in the Hauptbahnhof.

**Tourist office** (☎ 286 210; www.info-mainz.de/tourist; Brückenturm am Rathaus; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-2.30pm Sat) Signposted as 'Touristik Centrale Mainz', this place is across the pedestrian bridge (ie over the highway) from the Rathaus (town hall). The MainzCard (individual/family €6/10) gets you admission to museums (some are free anyway), a walking tour, unlimited public transport plus discounts for boat tours, plays and other events.

## Sights

### DOM

Mainz' famed **cathedral** (☎ 9am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat, 12.45-3pm & 4-6.30pm Sun, to 5pm Sun-Fri Nov-Feb), entered from the Marktplatz, is one of Germany's most magnificent houses of worship. The focal point of the Altstadt, this richly detailed 'mountain' of reddish sandstone, topped by an octagonal tower, went through a literal 'baptism by fire' when the original burned down just one day before its consecration in 1066. Most of what you see today is quintessential 12th-century Romanesque.

Inside, a solemn ambience pervades the nave which, surprisingly, has a choir at each end. The grandiose, wall-mounted **memorial tombstones** form a veritable portrait gallery of



archbishops and other 13th- to 18th-century power mongers, many portrayed alongside their private putti.

Off the late-Gothic cloister, accessible from inside the Dom, is the **Dom- und Diözesanmuseum** (Cathedral & Diocesan Museum; ☎ 253 344; www.dommuseum-mainz.de in German; ⌚ 10am-5pm, to 6pm Sat & Sun, closed Mon & Catholic holidays). The **Domschatz** (adult/student/family €3/2.50/6) features bejewelled ritual objects from as far back as the 10th century and 15th- and 16th-century tapestries (English guide pamphlet available). Across the cloister, the **Gewölbhallen** (adult/student/family €2.50/2/5, combination ticket €5/4/10) has artwork from the cathedral, including sculptures from the rood screen (1239) – the work of the renowned Master of Naumburg – that portray the saved and the, well, not-so-saved.

#### OTHER CHURCHES

On a hill, **St-Stephan-Kirche** (Kleine Weissgasse 12; ⌚ 10am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Sat, till 4.30pm Dec & Jan) would be just another Gothic church rebuilt after WWII were it not for the nine brilliant, stained-glass windows created by the Russian-Jewish artist Marc Chagall (1887–1985) in the final years of his life. Bright blue and imbued with a mystical, meditative quality, they serve as a symbol of Jewish-Christian reconciliation.

Mainz also has a trio of stunning baroque churches which illustrate the evolution of this often over-the-top architectural style. Part of the local Catholic seminary, the classically baroque **Augustinerkirche** (Augustinerstrasse 34; ⌚ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun when the seminary is in session), built in 1768, features an elaborate organ loft and a delicate ceiling fresco by Johann Baptist Enderle. Unlike so many other such structures in Germany, it has never been destroyed. **St Peterskirche** (Petersstrasse 3; ⌚ 9am-6pm) shows off the sumptuous glory of the rococo style and is noted for its richly adorned pulpit and altars. **St-Ignatius-Kirche** (Kapuzinerstrasse 36; ⌚ 9am-6pm) marks the transition from rococo to neoclassicism. The sculpture outside is a copy of one made by Hans Backoffen (the original is in the Dom- und Diözesanmuseum).

#### GUTENBERG MUSEUM

A heady experience for anyone excited by books, the **Gutenberg Museum** (☎ 122 644; Liebfrauenplatz 5; adult/student & senior/family €5/3/10; ⌚ 9am-5pm Tue-Sat, 11am-3pm Sun) chronicles the history of the technology that made the world as we know it –

including this guidebook – possible. Besides historical presses, old typesetting machines and several rooms on pre-Gutenberg printing in Korea, Japan and China, you can admire hand-copied manuscripts as well as printed masterpieces such as Gutenberg's original Bible. For a 1925 re-creation of Gutenberg's print shop, head to the basement. More English signs are planned.

In the museum's **Druckladen** (print shop; ☎ 122686; www.druckladen.mainz.de; group admission per person €3-5, individuals are asked for a donation; ⌚ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat), across tiny Seilerergasse, you can try out Gutenberg's technology yourself – on the condition that you're at least five years old. You'll be issued with a smock (the unique odour of printers' ink may, for many, conjure up the nobility of making the written word available to the masses – but the goop is hell to get out of fabric) and instructed in the art of hand-setting type – backwards, of course. Nearby, master craftsmen produce elegant posters, certificates and cards using the labour-intensive technologies of another age. Fascinating, especially in an era when 'print' usually means tapping a few computer keys. Hands-on kids-oriented activities are a speciality.

#### LANDESMUSEUM MAINZ

The rich and far-reaching collection of the **Landesmuseum Mainz** (State Museum; ☎ 285 70; Grosse Bleiche 49-51; adult/student & senior €2/1.50, more during special exhibitions, free on Sat; ⌚ 10am-8pm Tue, 10am-5pm Wed-Sun), housed in the former prince-electors' stables, traces the region's cultural history from the Stone Age to the present. Treasures include the famous **Jupitersäule**, a Roman triumphal column from the 1st century. The richly festooned façade of the **Kaufhaus am Brand**, a 14th-century trading house, is scheduled to go back on display in 2007 (renovations are scheduled to continue through 2009). Also of interest: Dutch and Flemish paintings, faïence and Art Nouveau glass.

#### MUSEUM FÜR ANTIKE SCHIFFFAHRT

In 1981 excavations for a hotel spectacularly unearthed the remains of five wooden ships of the Romans' Rhine flotilla, once used to thwart Germanic tribes trying to intrude upon Roman settlements. They are now on display, along with two full-size replicas, in the **Museum für Antike Schiffahrt** (Museum of Ancient Shipping; ☎ 286 630; Neutorstrasse 2b; admission free; ⌚ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun).

## FORTY-TWO LINES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

Johannes Gutenberg, the inventor of printing with moveable type, is one of those rare epochal figures whose achievements changed the course of human history. The Chinese came up with printing using a press long before Gutenberg but they used it to print designs on silk rather than spread the word, any word. Without Gutenberg, Martin Luther's career as a religious revolutionary might never have got off the ground.

Little is known about Gutenberg the man, who was born in Mainz in the very late 1300s, trained as a goldsmith and then, in the late 1420s, left for Strasbourg, where he first experimented with printing technology. By 1448 he was back in Mainz, still working on his top-secret project and in debt to some rather impatient 'venture capitalists'. But eventually his perseverance paid off and he perfected a number of interdependent technologies: metal type that could be arranged into pages; precision moulds to produce such type in large quantities; a metal alloy from which type could be cast; a type of oil-based ink suitable for printing with metal type; and press technology derived from existing wine, paper and bookbinding presses.

Despite several lawsuits, by 1455 Gutenberg had produced his masterpiece, the now-legendary Forty-Two-Line Bible, so-named because each page has 42 lines. Thus began a new era in human history, one in which the printed word – everything from lyrical poetry to Nazi propaganda – was to become almost universally accessible.

## Tours

Walking tours of the city (€5) in German and English begin at the tourist office at 2pm on Saturday; in the warm season, tours also begin at 2pm on Wednesday and Friday.

## Festivals & Events

The **Mainzer Johannisnacht** ([www.mainz.de/johannisnacht](http://www.mainz.de/johannisnacht)), held from Friday to Monday around 24 June, is one of Germany's largest street festivals, attracting more than half-a-million revellers. The 3.5km of city-centre festivities, which include the ceremonial initiation of printers' apprentices, also has music, theatre and folklore performances and a thousand street stalls, 150 of them dedicated to beer.

## Sleeping

The tourist office has a **room reservations hotline** (☎ 286 2128; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-2.30pm Sat); bookings can also be made via the tourist office website ([www.info-mainz.de/tourist](http://www.info-mainz.de/tourist)).

**Campingplatz Maarau** (☎ 06134-4383; [www.krk.de/camping.html](http://www.krk.de/camping.html); Auf der Maarau; adult/tent/car €4.20/3.20/2.70) Situated across the Rhine from the city centre at the confluence of the Rhine and Main, this grassy riverside camping ground is not far from an outdoor swimming pool. From the Hauptbahnhof take bus 6 or 6A to Brückenkopf; from there it's a 10-minute walk south.

**DJH hostel** (☎ 853 32; [www.jugendherberge.de](http://www.jugendherberge.de); Otto-Brunfels-Schneise 4; dm from €17.50; ☎ ☒) A modernised 166-bed hostel near a city park with

two- and four-bed rooms, all with private bathroom. About 3.5km from the Hauptbahnhof; take bus 62 or 63.

**Hotel Hof Ehrenfels** (☎ 971 2340; [www.hof-ehrenfels.de](http://www.hof-ehrenfels.de); Grebenstrasse 5-7; s/d/tr €55/78/95) Just steps from the cathedral, this 22-room place, housed in a 15th-century, one-time Carmelite nunnery, has prices and Dom views that are hard to beat. A real treat if you love the sound of church bells; consider bringing earplugs if you don't.

**Tulip Inn Mainz Central** (☎ 2760; [www.goldentulip.com](http://www.goldentulip.com); Bahnhofplatz 8; s €72-110, d €85-155; ☎ ☒) An air of faded glamour envelops this 58-room hotel, built in 1871, which in the heyday of rail travel hosted stars of film and stage. The spacious rooms are unexciting but the bathrooms come in tile colours they don't make anymore and you can still sit down in the lift.

**Hotel Schwan** (☎ 144 920; [www.mainz-hotel-schwan.de](http://www.mainz-hotel-schwan.de); Liebfrauenplatz 7; s/d €84/110) You can't get any more central than this family-run place, which has been around since 1463. The 22 well-lit rooms have baroque-style furnishings.

**Hotel Hammer** (☎ 965 2828; [www.hotel-hammer.com](http://www.hotel-hammer.com); Bahnhofplatz 6; s/d from €90/112, in low season from €71/86; ☎ ☒) With contemporary furnishings and an upbeat colour scheme, the Hammer is a pleasing place to camp out, close to the train station. The attractively designed sauna is a welcome bonus.

## Eating & Drinking

Cheap eateries are near the Hauptbahnhof and south of the Dom along Augustinerstrasse.

**Weinstube Hottum** (☎ 223 370; Grebenstrasse 3; dishes €4-10; ☎ ☎ 4pm-midnight, to 1am Sat) One of the best of the Altstadt wine taverns, Hottum has a cosy, traditional atmosphere, delectable wines and a menu – half of which appears on a tiny slate tablet – with regional dishes such as *Pfälzer Pfannkuchen* (pancakes) and *Wingersteak* (vintner-style pork steak).

**Eisgrubbräu** (☎ 221 104; Weissliengasse 1a; mains €4-14; ☎ ☎ 9am-1am, to 2am Fri & Sat) Grab a seat in this down-to-earth micro-brewery's warren of vaulted chambers, order a mug of *Schwarz* (dark) or *Hell* (light) – or even a 3/5L *Bierturm* (beer tower; €16/26) – and settle in for people-watching. The Monday-to-Friday, all-you-can-eat lunch buffet (€5), the Sunday buffet dinner (€8.50) and the Saturday and Sunday breakfast buffet (€3.90) are good value. Call two or three days ahead to arrange a free, 20-minute tour of the beer-making facilities.

**Heiliggeist** (☎ 225 757; Mailandgasse 11; mains €6-15; ☎ ☎ 4pm-1am Mon-Fri, 9am-2am Sat, Sun & holidays) Sit beneath the soaring Gothic vaults of a 15th-century hospital and enjoy a drink, snack or full meal from a menu with lots of Italian-inspired options.

**Specht** (☎ 231770; Rotekopfgasse 2; mains €9-14 ☎ ☎ 5pm-midnight Sun-Fri, 11.30am-midnight Sat, also 11.30am-midnight Sun Jun-Aug) Thanks to its ancient wood beams, smoked walls and Fastnacht (carnival) medals, 'Woodpecker' has a 19th-century feel though the building itself is much older. Serves German and regional cuisine made with fresh products from the nearby market. If the ceiling *doesn't* look uneven and wavy, you've drunk too much.

**Zur Kanzel** (☎ 237 137; Grebenstrasse 4; mains €15.50-22.50; ☎ closed Sun) A classy place with a distinctly French flair and a nice courtyard, this *Weinstube* (wine bar) serves up-market French and regional cuisine, including *pot au feu* (boiled meat and vegetables) and dishes made with *grüne Sosse* (a light sauce made with half-a-dozen fresh herbs, sour cream and soft white cheese). All products are fresh so the menu evolves with the seasons. From May to September, the chef-owner takes small groups on half-day wine and food cruises aboard a one-time police boat (€500 for eight to 10 people).

**Irish Pub** (☎ 231 430; Weissliengasse 5; ☎ ☎ 5pm-1am, to 2am Fri & Sat) An unpretentious watering hole with karaoke on Monday, solo musicians Tuesday to Thursday, bands on Friday and

Saturday and an open-mic night on Sunday (all from 9.30pm). Attracts a very international crowd that often includes US soldiers from nearby Wiesbaden.

Self-catering options:

**Cial supermarket** (Grosse Bleiche 41; ☎ ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat)

**Food market** (Marktplatz & Liebfrauenplatz; ☎ ☎ 7am-2pm Tue, Fri & Sat) Along the north and east sides of the Dom.

**Obst und Gemüse Erika Merz** (Augustinerstrasse 18; ☎ ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat) Fresh fruit and vegetables.

## Entertainment

Two free monthly mags, *Fritz* and *Der Mainzer*, available at the tourist office and in cafés and pubs, have details on cultural events. Tickets are available at the tourist office.

**KuZ** (☎ 286 860; [www.kuz.de](http://www.kuz.de), in German; Dagobertstrasse 20b) Dance parties, live concerts, a summer beer garden with al fresco movie screenings, a world-music summer festival, kids' theatre... the happening Kulturzentrum (cultural centre) has something for everyone. It's housed in a neat red-brick building that began life in the 19th century as a military laundry.

**Staatstheater** (☎ 285 1222; [www.staatstheater-mainz.de](http://www.staatstheater-mainz.de), in German; Gutenbergplatz 7) Mainz' theatre stages plays, opera and ballet. Students get significant discounts.

**Frankfurter Hof** (☎ 220 438; [www.frankfurter-hof-mainz.de](http://www.frankfurter-hof-mainz.de), in German; Augustinerstrasse 55) In the late 1980s a group of preservation-minded citizens saved this historical building from demolition and turned it into a hugely popular performance venue. Since 1991 it has hosted everyone from up-and-comers to big-name acts such as Joe Jackson and Wir sind Helden.

## Getting There & Away

Frankfurt Airport, 30km northeast of Mainz, is linked to the Hauptbahnhof by S-Bahn line 8 (€3.40, several times hourly).

Mainz, a major IC rail hub, has frequent regional services to Bingen (€5.30, 35 minutes) and other Romantic Rhine towns, Koblenz (€14.70, 1½ hours), Idar-Oberstein (€9.80, one hour), Saarbrücken (€24.30, two hours) and Worms (€7.60, 26 to 44 minutes).

Mainz is encircled by a ring road with connections to the A60, A63 and A66.

City-centre parking options are limited to pricey underground garages and street spots with one- or two-hour time limits. On the southeast edge, there's free parking on Am

Winterhafen, just east of KuZ. You could also design your own Park & Ride schedule by leaving your vehicle outside the centre along a tram line.

For details on Cruising down the Romantic Rhine, see p484.

## Getting Around

Mainz operates a joint bus and tram system with Wiesbaden ([www.mvg-mainz.de](http://www.mvg-mainz.de), in German). Single tickets cost €2.10; day passes are €4.90/8 for individuals/groups of up to five. Tickets are available from vending machines and must be stamped before boarding.

**ASM Fahrradverleih** (☎ 238 620; Binger Strasse 19; 3-speed/mountain bike/tandem per day €5.50/8/14; ☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat Apr-Sep) hires out bikes on the ground level of CityPort Parkhaus, near the Hauptbahnhof.

## WORMS

☎ 06241 / pop 81,000

Worms (rhymes with 'forms'), one of Germany's oldest cities, has played a pivotal role at various moments in European history. In AD 413 it became capital of the legendary, if short-lived, Burgundian kingdom whose rise and fall was creatively chronicled in the 12th-century *Nibelungenlied*, featured in a local museum and the annual *Nibelungen-Festspiele* ([www.nibelungenfestspiele.de](http://www.nibelungenfestspiele.de), in German), a two-week festival held in mid-August.

After the Burgundians, just about every other tribe in the area had a go at ruling Worms, including the Huns, the Alemans and finally the Franks, under whose leader, Charlemagne, the city flourished. The most impressive reminder of Worms' medieval heyday is its majestic, late-Romanesque Dom. A Jewish community, renowned for the erudition of its rabbis, thrived here from the 10th century until the 1930s, earning Worms the moniker 'Little Jerusalem'.

In the Middle Ages, Worms hosted more than 100 sessions of the imperial parliament (Diet), including one in 1521 at which Luther famously refused to recant his views and was declared an outlaw. An impressive memorial now honours the Protestant reformer.

## Orientation

From the Hauptbahnhof and adjacent bus station, pedestrianised Wilhelm-Leuschner-Strasse leads 500m southeast to Lutherplatz, on the northwest edge of the half-oval-shaped

Altstadt. From there, it's 150m southeast to Kämmererstrasse, the old city's main commercial thoroughfare, and 300m south to the Dom. A plane-shaded promenade runs along the Rhine about 800m east of the Dom.

## Information

There are ATMs inside the Hauptbahnhof and along nearby Wilhelm-Leuschner-Strasse. **Gerhard Neef** (Neumarkt 14; ☎ 4.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 5.30am-3.30pm Sat) A newsagent that sells events tickets; also carries brochures from the tourist office, which is next door.

**Internet und Telefonhaus** (Hardtgasse 7; per hr €1; ☎ 10am-11pm or midnight) Across the street from Woolworth's.

**Post office** (Kaiserpassage)

**TeleBistro** (per hr €1) Kämmererstrasse 50 (☎ 9.30am or 10am-11pm); Neumarkt 3-5 (☎ 9am-11pm) Internet access.

**Tourist office** (☎ 250 45; [www.worms.de](http://www.worms.de); Neumarkt 14; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri year-round, 9.30am-1.30pm Sat, 10am-2pm Sun Apr-Oct) Sells events tickets and can supply you with a walking-tour brochure in English.

## Sights

### KAISERDOM

Worms' skyline, such as it is, is dominated by the four towers and two domes of the magnificent **Dom St Peter und St Paul** (☎ 9am-5.45pm Apr-Oct, to 4.45pm Nov-Mar), built in the 11th and 12th centuries in the late-Romanesque style. Inside, the lofty dimensions impress as much as the lavish, canopied **high altar** (1742) in the east choir, designed by the baroque master Balthasar Neumann. In the south transept, a **scale model** shows the enormity of the original complex. Nearby stairs lead down to the stuffy **crypt**, which holds the stone sarcophagi of several members of the Salian dynasty of Holy Roman emperors.

In the *Nibelungenlied*, the **Kaiserportal** (open only during services) on the north side was the setting of a fierce quarrel between the Burgundian queens Kriemhild and Brunhilde about who had the right to enter the Dom first. Trivial as it may seem, this little interchange ultimately led to their kingdom's downfall. Today, the main entrance is through the Gothic **Südportal** (south portal; 1300), richly decorated with biblical figures.

### JEWISH SITES

Starting in the 900s, the Jewish community of Worms – known as Varmaiza in medieval

Jewish texts – was centred on the northeast corner of the Altstadt along Judengasse and its side streets. Before 1933 1100 Jews lived in the city; a Jewish community – now numbering 130 souls, almost all of them from the former USSR – was re-established in the late 1990s.

Worms' most ancient synagogue, founded in 1034, was destroyed by the Nazis but in 1961 a new **Alte Synagoge** (Synagogenplatz; admission free; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Apr-Oct, to 4pm Nov-Mar, closed to visitors Sat morning) rose from its ashes. Men are asked to cover their heads. Around the side, stone steps lead down to the 12th-century, Romanesque **Mikwe** (ritual bath).

Behind the synagogue is the modern **Raschi Haus**, built on the 14th-century foundations of a community wedding hall. It is named after Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaqi), a brilliant 11th-century Talmudic scholar who studied in Worms. Inside is the **Jüdisches Museum** (Jewish Museum; ☎ 853 4707; Hintere Judengasse 6; adult/student €1.50/0.80; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, to 4.30pm Nov-Mar), which illustrates Jewish customs, ceremonies and festivals and tells the history of the local Jewish community. The singed Torah fragments were burnt on Reichspogromnacht (Kristallnacht; literally 'Night of Broken Glass'; see boxed text, p35).

Just east of here is the arched **Raschitor**, a city gate that's part of the wall that still partially encircles the Altstadt.

A bit outside the southwest corner of the Altstadt is the peaceful **Alter Jüdische Friedhof** (Old Jewish Cemetery; Willy-Brandt-Ring 21; ☎ 9am-dusk, to 8pm Jul-Aug), also known as the Heiliger Sand, opened in 1076. The most revered gravestone – it's one of two topped with especially large piles of pebbles, left by visitors as tokens of respect – is that of Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg (1215-93), who died in captivity after being imprisoned by King Rudolf of Habsburg for attempting to lead a group of persecuted Jews to Palestine.

### NIBELUNGEN MUSEUM

The *Nibelungenlied* is the ultimate tale of love and hate, treasure and treachery, revenge and death, with a cast including dwarves, dragons and bloodthirsty *Überfrauen* (superwomen). Richard Wagner set it to music, Fritz Lang turned it into a masterful silent movie and the Nazis abused its mythology, seeing in Siegfried the quintessential German hero.

The state-of-the-art **Nibelungen Museum** (☎ 202 120; [www.nibelungen-museum.de](http://www.nibelungen-museum.de); Fischerpfortchen

10; adult/child €5.50/3.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, 9am-10pm Fri) brings the epic to life in a highly entertaining, multimedia exhibit set up in two towers and along the ramparts of the medieval town wall. In the first tower you can listen to the anonymous poet tell his tale (in flawless English) via a wireless headset while watching excerpts from Lang's movies.

### OTHER MUSEUMS

Two blocks south of the Dom, the **Museum der Stadt** (City Museum; ☎ 946 390; Weckerlingplatz 7; adult/student/family €2/1/5, more during special exhibitions; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun), housed in the handsome Andreassstift Kirche, chronicles Worms' turbulent history from Neolithic and (especially) Roman times onward.

In the corner of a pretty park just north of the Dom, on the grounds of the former imperial and bishop's palace, is the **Museum Heylshof** (☎ 220 00; Stephansgasse 9; adult/student €2.50/1/5; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Sun May-Sep, 2-5pm Tue-Sat & 11am-5pm Sun Oct-Dec & mid-Jan-Apr). Its important private art collection includes Italian, Dutch, French and German paintings from the 15th to the 19th centuries, including works by such heavyweights as Tintoretto, Rubens and Lenbach. The Frankenthaler porcelain, Venetian, Bohemian and German glass and beer steins (in the basement) are also worth a look.

## Sleeping

**DJH hostel** (☎ 257 80; [www.jugendherberge.de](http://www.jugendherberge.de); Dechaneigasse 1; dm €18, s/d €23.50/47; ☎ reception 7.30am-11pm; ☎ X) In an unbeatable location facing the south side of the Dom. The recently renovated rooms have two to six beds and private bathrooms.

**Hotel Lortze-Eck** (☎ 263 49; 273 70; Schlossergasse 10-14; s/d €44/70) This family-run, 14-room hotel is a fairly stylish choice, particularly suitable if you like fake, well-intentioned flowers. Bright colours and tasteful knick-knacks brighten up the public areas. The attached restaurant serves German classics as well as vegetarian dishes (mains €9 to €14).

**Hotel Kriemhilde** (☎ 911 50; [www.hotel-kriemhilde.de](http://www.hotel-kriemhilde.de); Hofgasse 2-4; s/d €48/70) Wake up to the peal of the Dom bells at this unassuming inn. It's a mere stone's throw from the mighty cathedral, which is visible from the top-floor rooms and audible everywhere.

**Parkhotel Prinz Carl** (☎ 3080; [www.parkhotel-prinzcarl.de](http://www.parkhotel-prinzcarl.de); Prinz-Carl-Anlage 10-14; s/d from €75/115; ☎ X) Housed in one-time barracks built –

and built to last – during the reign of the last Kaiser, this place has 90 pastel rooms that are spacious, comfortable and impersonal. From the Hauptbahnhof, the hotel, just off Pforten-Ring, is a 500m walk north through the chestnut-shaded park.

### Eating & Drinking

Several Italian restaurants can be found a block southeast of the Dom on Gerberstrasse. Cheap eats are available up towards the Hauptbahnhof along Wilhelm-Leuschner-Strasse. The Hotel Lortze-Eck has a restaurant.

**Trattoria-Pizzeria Pepe e Sale** (☎ 258 36; Wollstrasse 12; pizzas €2.60-5.70; ☎ 11am-midnight) Serves more than 200 different kinds of pizzas as well as pastas, including Spaghetti Robinson (tuna and garlic). Excellent value.

**Café TE** (☎ 234 65; Bahnhofstrasse 5; mains €2.60-10.60; ☎ 8am or 9am-1am, to 2am Sat) A trackside bar-café and beer garden half-a-block south of the Hauptbahnhof that's especially popular with students. Chic in an Italian sort of way, it features 16 breakfast options and a different dinner special each night. Local bands sometimes play here.

**Café Ohne Gleichen** (☎ 411 177; Kriemhildenstrasse 11; light meals €4-8; ☎ 9am-1am, to 2am on Fri, Sat & holidays) A long block south of the Hauptbahnhof, this eclectic, student-oriented café-bar has off-the-wall art on the arty walls and serves drinks, cheap meals and, on Saturday, Sunday and holidays, brunch (€6.90). Occasionally hosts live bands.

**Marktkaufsupermarket** (Schönauerstrasse 3; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat) Self-caterers will find the entrance to this supermarket two blocks south of the tourist office on Gerberstrasse.

Along the Rhine to the north of the bridges, along the riverfront promenade known as Am Rhein, are several hugely popular beer garden-type eateries, including **Hagenbräu** (Am Rhein 5; mains €5-10), a microbrewery that serves hearty German fare.

### Getting There & Around

Worms is about 50km south of Mainz and has frequent train connections with Mannheim (€4.50), a major rail hub, as well as Mainz (€7.60, 26 to 44 minutes, twice hourly) and Bingen (€18.30, 70 minutes). Going to Speyer (€7.20) requires a change in Ludwigshafen.

There's free parking in a huge lot just north of the Nibelungsbrücke, Worms' Rhine bridge, which is currently being doubled.

Bicycles can be rented at **Radhaus-Mihm** (☎ 242 08; Von Steubenstrasse 8; 3-speed/all-terrain per day €5/12.50, weekend €7.50/19, tandem per day €12.50; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat), across the tracks from the Hauptbahnhof. The local **ADFC club** (www.adfc-worms.de, in German) organises group rides. The tourist office sells cycling maps.

### SPEYER

☎ 06232 / pop 50,000

Speyer, about 50km south of Worms, is a dignified town with a compact, mostly-modern centre distinguished by a magnificent Romanesque cathedral, a couple of top-rate museums and a respected culinary scene.

First a Celtic settlement, then Roman market town, Speyer gained prominence in the Middle Ages under the Salian emperors, hosting 50 imperial parliament sessions (1294-1570).

In 1076 the king and later Holy Roman Emperor Heinrich IV – having been excommunicated by Pope Gregory VII – launched his penitence walk to Canossa in Italy from Speyer. He crossed the Alps in the middle of winter, an action that warmed even the heart of the pope, who revoked his excommunication. He lies buried in the Kaiserdom.

### Orientation

Majestic Maximilianstrasse, the city centre's main commercial street, extends from the Altpörtel (a medieval city gate) 800m east to the Dom. The numbering of the buildings along Maximilianstrasse begins at the Dom, runs along the south side to the Altpörtel, then it continues along the north side back to the Dom – be prepared for confusion! The Hauptbahnhof is about 1km north of the Altpörtel.

### Information

**ATM** (Maximilianstrasse 47) Near the Altpörtel.

**Post office** (Wormser Strasse 4) A block northeast of the Altpörtel.

**Silver Surfer** (Schulgasse 2, Königsplatz; per hr €3; ☎ 11am-midnight Mon-Sat, 1pm-midnight Sun) Internet access a block south of Maximilianstrasse.

**Tourist office** (☎ 142 392; www.speyer.de; Maximilianstrasse 13; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri year-round, 10am-3pm Sat, 10am-2pm Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-noon Sat Nov-Mar) Inside the historic Rathaus.

### Sights

#### KAISERDOM

In 1030 Emperor Konrad II of the Salian dynasty laid the cornerstone of the majestic

Romanesque **Kaiserdom** (☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Mar, closed Sun morning), whose square towers and green copper dome float above Speyer's rooftops. A Unesco World Heritage site since 1981, its interior is startling for its awesome dimensions (it's an astonishing 134m long) and austere, dignified symmetry; walk up to the elevated altar area to get a true sense of its vastness. Another set of steps leads down to the darkly festive **crypt**, whose candy-striped Romanesque arches – like those on the west front – recall Moorish architecture. Stuffed into a side room are the granite sarcophagi of eight Salian emperors and kings, along with some of their queens. The most scenic way to approach the Dom is from Maximilianstrasse.

Behind the Dom, the large **Domgarten** (cathedral park) stretches towards the Rhine.

#### MAXIMILIANSTRASSE

Roman troops and medieval emperors once paraded down 'Via Triumphalis'. Now known as Maximilianstrasse, Speyer's pedestrian-only commercial main drag links the Dom with the 55m-high, 13th-century **Altpörtel** (adult/concession €1/0.50; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct), the city's western gate and the only remaining part of the town wall. The clock (1761) has separate dials for minutes and hours. The views from up top are superb.

A favourite with window-shoppers and strollers alike, Maximilianstrasse is lined with baroque buildings of which the **Rathaus** (at No 13), with its red façade and lavish rococo interior, and the **Alte Münze** (Old Mint; at No 90) are worth a look. The 18th-century writer **Sophie von la Roche** (1730-1807), founder of the first magazine for women, lived in the light blue building at No 99 (almost across the street from the tourist office); a new **exhibit** (admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat) illustrates her life and work. The same building houses two antiquarian bookshops.

A block south of the Rathaus is the **Judenhof** (Jews' Courtyard; ☎ 291 971; Kleine Pfaffengasse 21; adult/youth aged 7-17yr €2/1; ☎ 10am-5pm, closed Nov-Mar), where, in the courtyard, the excavated remains of a 12th-century synagogue and ritual bath hint at the glories of the city's storied medieval Jewish community. Signs are in English. A curious fact: everyone with the surname of Shapira (or Shapiro) is descended from Jews who lived in Speyer during the Middle Ages.

#### HISTORISCHES MUSEUM DER PFALZ

The truly superb **Historisches Museum der Pfalz** (Historical Museum of the Palatinate; ☎ 620 222; Domplatz; adult/student €4/3, during special exhibitions €8/6; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), in addition to hosting world-class special exhibitions, has a permanent collection that values quality over quantity. One of the highlights is the **Goldener Hut von Schifferstadt**, an incredibly ornate, perfectly preserved gilded hat, shaped like a giant thimble, that dates back to the Bronze Age. The **Wine Museum** features a bottle containing an unappetizing jellied substance from the 3rd century AD, purported to be the world's oldest wine. Two floors below is the **Domschatz** (cathedral treasury), whose prized exhibit is Emperor Konrad II's surprisingly simple bronze crown.

#### TECHNIK MUSEUM

It's easy to spend an entire day wandering around this amazing **museum** (☎ 670 80; Am Technik Museum 1; adult/child under 14yr €12/10, IMAX €8/6, combined ticket €16/12; ☎ 9am-6pm, to 7pm Sat & Sun), 1km south of the Dom (on the other side of the A61 highway). You can explore – and even climb aboard – a variety of aeroplanes, trains and vintage vehicles, including a genuine Boeing 747 (how in the world did they get it here and then mount it 28m off the ground?), a U9 submarine and an Antonov-22, the world's largest prop plane. Kids will love the playgrounds, various motion simulators, the 54m slide and two Imax theatres.

#### SEALIFE SPEYER

Situated on the Rhine 700m northeast of the Dom, this somewhat kitschy **aquarium** (☎ 697 80; www.sealifeurope.com; Im Hafenecken 5; adult/child 3-14yr/senior & student/family €12/8.50/9.50/38; ☎ 10am-7pm Jul-Sep, 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, Sun & holidays Apr-Jun & Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Mar), which is privately run with input from Greenpeace, and one of nine ecologically-minded Sea Life aquariums around Germany. For details see p455.

### Sleeping

**DJH hostel** (☎ 615 97; www.jugendherberge.de; Geibstrasse 5; dm €18, d €47; ☎ reception 7.30am-8pm; ☎ ) A modern hostel on the Rhine, a bit east of the Technik Museum. Has 48 rooms, including 13 doubles, all with private bathroom. Linked to the Hauptbahnhof by the City-Shuttle bus.

**Maximilian** (☎ 622 648; info@café-maximilian.de; Korgasse 15; apt €45-50) Also a café-bistro, Maximilian rents out two-person apartments.

**Hotel Zum Augarten** (☎ 754 58; www.augarten.de, in German; Rheinhäuser Strasse 52; s €44-54, d €65-75; Ⓟ ☒) A cosy, family-run, family-friendly hotel where you'll enjoy German guesthouse hospitality and observe suburban German life up close. Situated 1.7km south of the Dom – from the Technik Museum take Industrie-strasse and turn right on Am Flugplatz.

**Hotel Trutzpfaff** (☎ 292 529; www.trutzpfaff-hotel.de, in German; Webergasse 5; s/d €54/74; ☎ reception 8am-8pm; Ⓟ ☒) Centrally situated just a block south of the tourist office, this unassuming hostelry has eight pretty average rooms and a tavern (open Monday to Friday; mains cost €6.80 to €15.90) serving Palatine specialities such as *Saumagen* (a pig's stomach stuffed with meat, potatoes and spices that's boiled, sliced and then briefly fried).

**Hotel am Technik Museum** (☎ 671 00; www.hotel-am-technik-museum.de; Am Technik Museum 1; s/d €55/80; Ⓟ ☒) Part of the Technik Museum complex, this place has 108 charmless, institutional rooms with adequate comforts. Those travelling by campervan or with a tent can stay at the adjacent Stellplatz (€19 per site), open year-round.

**Hotel Domhof** (☎ 132 90; www.domhof.de in German; Bauhof 3; s €92, d €112-122, cheaper Sun night; Ⓟ ☒ ☒) A hotel has stood on this spot next to the Dom – which is an unbeatable location – since the Middle Ages, once hosting emperors, kings and councillors. The 49 rooms, wrapped around an ivied, cobbled courtyard, are very 1990s.

### Eating & Drinking

A selection of eateries can be found along Maximilianstrasse and nearby streets. The Hotel Trutzpfaff has a restaurant.

**Maximilian** (☎ 622 648; Korgasse 15; mains €6-16) Just inside the Altpörtel, this convivial café-bistro serves up 12 different breakfasts, salads, lots of Italian options and cheap dinner specials (€5.80).

**Domhof-Hausbrauerei** (☎ 740 55; Grosse Him-mels-gasse 6; mains €6-15; ☎ 11am-midnight, to 1am Fri & Sat) Speyer's loveliest beer garden, shaded by chestnut trees, is just steps west of the Dom and has its own children's playground. The menu features Palatine and international favourites, some prepared using beer brewed on the premises.

**Zweierlei** (☎ 611 10; Johannesstrasse 1, nr Salzgasse; mains €6-19; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) This trendy bistro-restaurant, a block north of the tourist

office, serves German nouvelle cuisine amid minimalist, ultra-modern décor. If you go for the 'Tender' dinner offer, the chef will randomly assign you an hors d'oeuvre, a main dish and a dessert (€6 each).

**Backmulde** (☎ 715 77; Karmeliterstrasse 11-13; mains €12-28; ☎ lunch & dinner) Owner-chef Gunter Schmidt has a knack for spinning fresh, local products into gourmet dishes with a Mediterranean flavour. With an epic wine list, it's considered one of Speyer's finest restaurants. A block south of the Altpörtel.

Picnic supplies are available at **Tengelmann supermarket** (Maximilianstrasse 50; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat), next to the Altpörtel.

### Getting There & Around

A new S-Bahn line links the Hauptbahnhof with Ludwigshafen and Mannheim, both key rail hubs. Buses (eg bus 717 to Heidelberg) depart from the Hauptbahnhof but the train is usually faster.

Parking costs €2 per day at the Festplatz, 500m south of the Dom and just under the A61 from the Technik Museum.

The City-Shuttle minibus (bus 565; day pass €1) links the garden behind the Dom, the Festplatz, the Technik Museum, Sealife and the youth hostel at 10- or 15-minute intervals from 6am (9am on Sunday) to 8pm.

Bikes can be hired from **Radsport Stiller** (☎ 759 66; Gilgenstrasse 24; bike/tandem per day €10/20; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat), a block south-west of the Altpörtel. The **Kaiser-Konrad-Radweg** (35km; Kaiser Konrad bicycle path) links Speyer's Dom with Bad Dürkheim's Rathaus.

### GERMAN WINE ROAD

The **Deutsche Weinstrasse** (www.deutsche-weinstrasse.de, in German) traverses the heart of the Palatinate (Pfalz), a region of gentle forests, ruined castles and Germany's largest contiguous wine-growing area. Starting in Bockenheim, about 15km west of Worms, it winds south 85km to Schweigen on the French border. Hiking and cycling options are legion.

Blessed with a moderate climate that allows almonds, figs, kiwi fruit and even lemons to thrive, the German Wine Road is especially pretty during the spring bloom. The **wine festival season** from May to October is also a good time to visit, especially around the grape harvest (September and October).

In part because of its proximity to France, the Palatinate is a renowned culinary destina-

tion, with restaurants serving everything from gourmet New German cuisine to traditional regional specialities such as *Saumagen*. In the **Pfälzerwald** (the hilly forest west of the Wine Road), locals often plan a day out-of-doors in order to dine in a Waldhütte, a traditional Palatine eatery found along forest trails.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Neustadt an der Weinstrasse, a central hub from which to start exploring the German Wine Road, is on the twice-an-hour Heidelberg–Mannheim–Kaiserslautern railway line and also has twice-hourly train links to Saarbrücken (€15.50, 1½ hours) and Karlsruhe (€9.10, one hour). The trip from Speyer requires a change at Schifferstadt. The Rhein-Haardtbahn (RHB) light rail line links Bad Dürkheim with Mannheim (€4.50, 50 minutes, at least hourly).

### GETTING AROUND

The German Wine Road is most easily explored by car or bicycle (look for the yellow signs sporting a cluster of grapes). Area tourist offices sell the 1:50,000-scale *Deutsche Weinstrasse* cycling map (€6.50), which details a multitude of *Radwanderwege* (bike paths and cycleable back roads).

Thanks to Germany's superb public transport system, it's possible to get almost everywhere – including to trailheads and *from* hike destinations – by public transport. Twice an hour, local trains that take bicycles head from Neustadt north to Deidesheim and Bad Dürkheim and south to Landau. Bus options

(every half-hour Monday to Friday, hourly on Saturday, Sunday and holidays) from Neustadt include bus 512 to Deidesheim and Bad Dürkheim and bus 501 to Landau via wine villages such as Hambach, Weyer and Gleisweiler. From Landau, buses continue south to Bad Bergzabern and Schweigen. A number of Pfälzerwald villages west of Neustadt, including Lindenberg, are served by bus 517.

### Neustadt an der Weinstrasse

☎ 06321 / pop 54,000

The busy, modern town of Neustadt has preserved a rather charming, largely pedestrianised **Altstadt** teeming with half-timbered houses. It is anchored by the **Marktplatz**, an attractive square flanked by the baroque **Rathaus** and the 14th- and 15th-century Gothic **Stiftskirche** (open only during services), a red-sandstone structure that's been shared by Protestant and Catholic congregations since 1708.

About 4km south of the centre is the **Hambacher Schloss** (Hambacher Castle; ☎ 308 81; admission to grounds free, exhibit adult/student €4.50/1.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Mar-Nov), known as the 'cradle of German Democracy'. It was here that students held massive protests for a free, democratic and united Germany on 27 May 1832, during which the German tricolour flag of black, red and gold was raised for the first time. Today an exhibition commemorates the event, known to history as the Hambacher Fest. Views over the vineyards and the Rhine plains are best from the tower. Bus 502 makes the trip here hourly.

### ROAD-TRIP RADIO IN ENGLISH

While tooling around Rhineland-Palatinate, the Saarland and much of Baden-Württemberg, you can crank up the car radio and tune in to a variety of often surprising programmes in English.

When atmospheric conditions are right (as they almost always are at night), the **BBC World Service** can be picked up on 648 kHz AM (medium wave) and, if you're lucky, **BBC Radio 4** can be heard on 198 kHz longwave.

To feel like you're in Middle America, just tune to a station run by the **AFN** (American Forces Network; www.afneturope.net), whose intended audience is US military personnel serving at places like Ramstein Air Base near Kaiserslautern and the Wiesbaden US Army Garrison. Programming you might come across includes NPR (National Public Radio) favourites such as *Car Talk*, pearls of populism from Rush Limbaugh, and news from AP Radio News, CNN Radio and something called the Pentagon Channel. One music show boasts that it plays 'music worth fighting for'. The public service advertisements, peppered with unfathomable acronyms, give a flavour of US military life in Germany. The most powerful relay frequencies to check are 873 kHz AM (transmission from Frankfurt), 1107 kHz (from Kaiserslautern) and 1143 kHz (from Stuttgart). There are also a variety of local FM options.

**INFORMATION**

**ATM** Across the street from the tourist office in the shopping mall.

**Internet café** (Friedrichstrasse 8; per hr €1; ☎ 11am-10pm) Around the corner from the tourist office.

**Tourist office** (☎ 926 892; www.neustadt.pfalz.com, in German; Hetzelplatz 1; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-noon Sat Apr-Oct, 9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri Nov-Mar) Across the parklike Bahnhofplatz from the Hauptbahnhof. Has ample information on hiking and cycling options.

**SLEEPING & EATING**

Neustadt's nicest lodging options are in Haardt, a suburb northwest of the town centre. There are quiet a few restaurants in Neustadt's Altstadt.

**DJH hostel** (☎ 2289; www.jugendherberge.de; Hans-Geiger-Strasse 27; dm €18; ☒) A modern facility with 122 beds in rooms for one, two and four people, all with private bathroom. A 15-minute walk south of the Hauptbahnhof.

**Hotel Tenner** (☎ 9660; www.hotel-tenner.de in German; Mandelring 216, Haardt; s/d from €64/89; ☐ ☒) Surrounded by vineyards, this 32-room hotel, on a quiet suburban street, offers sweeping views of the Hambacher Schloss. In fine weather, breakfast is served on the pebbly panoramic patio. To get there from the town centre, take bus 512 or drive northeast on Maximilianstrasse and hang a left onto Haardter Strasse.

**Pelgen's Worschtstubb** (☎ 34 420; Hintergasse 14; Saumagen €7.50) Serves prize-winning *Saumagen* and other Palatine delicacies. Situated two blocks east of the Stiftskirche on a street lined with half-timbered houses, many sheltering restaurants.

**Liebstockl** (☎ 313 61; Mittelgasse 22; meat mains from €10; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed-Mon) Has a beer garden and a hearty meat-heavy menu complemented by a few vegetarian choices (€8).

**Mandelhof** (☎ 882 20; www.mandelhof.de in German; Mandelring 11, Haardt; 3-course meals €18.90; ☎ restaurant & perhaps hotel closed Wed; ☐ ☒) Up on a hill overlooking the town, this gourmet restaurant has a delightful terrace and several lovely rooms (singles/doubles from €50/80). A leisurely walk leads to the Wolfsburg ruin.

The Marktplatz hosts a **food market** (mornings Tue & Sat year-round, morning Thu May-Oct).

**GETTING AROUND**

The bus station is next to the Hauptbahnhof. Bikes can be rented from **Fahrrad Trimpe** (☎ 487 070; Branchweilerhofstrasse 11; per day €10), 10 blocks east of the Hauptbahnhof.

**Deidesheim**

☎ 06326 / pop 3800

Diminutive Deidesheim, awash in wisteria and one of the German Wine Road's most picturesque villages, is home to about 30 wine-makers; look for signs reading *Weingut* (winery), *Verkauf* (sale) and *Weinprobe* (wine tasting). The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 967 70; www.deidesheim.de; Bahnhofstrasse 5; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri year-round, 10am-noon Sat Apr-Oct) is 150m across the car park from the Hauptbahnhof.

Deidesheim is centred on the historic Marktplatz, where you'll find a Gothic church, **Pfarrkirche St Ulrich** (open daily), and the 16th-century **Altes Rathaus**, noted for its canopied open staircase. Inside is the three-storey **Museum für Weinkultur** (Wine Museum; ☎ 981 561; Marktplatz 8; admission free; ☎ 3-6pm Wed-Sun & holidays Mar-Dec), whose displays include naive art portrayals of the German Wine Road (English brochure available).

Down an alleyway across from the Rathaus, the **Deutsches Film- und Fototechnik Museum** (Film & Photography Museum; ☎ 6568; Weinstrasse 33; adult/student & senior €3/2.50; ☎ 4-6.30pm Wed-Fri, 2-6.30pm Sat & Sun Mar-Dec) has a truly impressive collection of historical photographic equipment. Veteran shutterbugs may be able to spot every camera they've ever used.

Galleries and studios can be visited along the **Rundgang Kunst und Kultur** (art and culture trail); look for the black-on-yellow 'K' signs. A leaflet available at the tourist office has details and opening hours.

Near the tourist office, the whimsical **Geissbockbrunnen** (Goat Fountain), erected in 1985, celebrates a quirky local tradition. For seven centuries, the nearby town of Lambrecht has had to pay an annual tribute of one goat for using pastureland belonging to Deidesheim. The presentation of this goat, which is auctioned off to raise funds for local cultural activities, culminates in the raucous **Geissbockfest** (Goat Festival), held on Pentecost Tuesday.

**SLEEPING & EATING**

**Gästehaus Ritter von Böhl** (☎ 972 201; www.ritter-von-boehl.de in German; Weinstrasse 35; s €45, d €70-85; ☎ reception 9am-6pm, sometimes closed Sun; ☐ ☒) This 27-room guesthouse, set around a delightful, wisteria-wrapped courtyard, belongs to, and occupies part of the grounds of, a charity hospital (now an old-age home) founded in 1494.

**Deidesheimer Hof** (☎ 968 70; www.deidesheimerhof.de; Am Marktplatz; s/d from €120/165, low season from €95/125; ☐ ☒) One of the region's few hotels with five coveted stars, this renowned hostelry has 28 elegant rooms, each unique, and two fine restaurants: St Urban (four-course meals €39), whose regional offerings include *Saumagen*, made with chestnuts in autumn; and the gourmet Schwarzer Hahn (five-/six-/seven-course meals €75/85/95; open for dinner Tuesday to Saturday), which specialises in creative French- and Palatine-style dishes.

**Turmstüb'l** (☎ 981 081; Turmstrasse 3; mains €5-14) This contemporary, artsy wine-café, down an alley from the church, serves tasty hot dishes, including regional specialities such as *Saumagen*.

**Gasthaus zur Kanne** (☎ 966 00; Weinstrasse 31; mains €8-20; ☎ noon-2pm & 6-10pm Wed-Sun, noon-9pm Sun & holidays) Serves refined regional cuisine. You can sit inside at hand-painted tables or in the leafy courtyard.

**GETTING AROUND**

**Steinweg** (☎ 982 284; www.gepaeckservice-pfalz.de in German; Kirchgartenstrasse 49), 200m from the tourist office, rents bikes (€6.50 per day) and arranges cycling tours with Olympic cycling champion Stefan Steinweg.

**Bad Dürkheim**

☎ 06322 / pop 18,600

Bad Dürkheim is a handsome, easily walkable spa town as famous for its salty thermal springs as for the annual **Dürkheimer Wurstmart** (sausage market; www.duerkheimer-wurstmart.de), held in the second and third weeks of September, which bills itself as the world's largest wine festival. Most of the action takes place around the **Dürkheimer Riesenfass**, a gargantuan wine cask that's had a restaurant inside since a master cooper built it in 1934.

**INFORMATION**

**Spielotek** (Kurgartenstrasse 10; per hr €2; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Sat, 11am-10pm Sun & holidays) Internet access – but only if you're over 18.

**Tourist office** (☎ 956 6250; www.bad-duerkheim.de in German; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 11am-1pm or 3pm Sat & Sun). In the Kurzentrum building. Has a town map in English.

**SIGHTS**

Between the Hauptbahnhof and the tourist office lies the **Kurpark**, a grassy, azeala-

and wisteria-filled park where you'll find a **children's playground** (in the corner nearest the Hauptbahnhof) and most of the town's spa and wellness facilities. Classic and exotic treatments range from a full-body massage (30 minutes for €24) to Nuad Tao (Thai foot massage). For reservations (required for all but the thermal baths and sauna) stop by the **Kurzentrum** (spa centre; ☎ 9640; www.kurzentrum-bad-duerkheim.de in German; Kurbrunnenstrasse 14). **Vitalis**, another spa run by the same company, is next door.

The city-run **Salinarium** (☎ 935 865; www.salinarium.de in German; adult/child over 6yr €5.50/3, saunas €11.50/9), a year-round complex of indoor and outdoor swimming pools (only one of which is saltwater) and saunas, is a few hundred metres to the northeast.

Hiking options include **Weinwanderwege** (vineyard trails) from St Michaelskapelle, a chapel atop a little vine-clad hill a bit northeast of the tourist office, to Honigsäckel and Hochmess; and forest trails to two historic ruins, **Limburg** (1½ hours) and **Hardenburg** (two hours). The **Kaiser-Konrad-Radweg** (35km) links Bad Dürkheim's Rathaus with Speyer's Dom.

**SLEEPING & EATING**

Several restaurants with warm-season terraces can be found on Römerplatz and along nearby Kurgartenstrasse.

**Knaus Camping Park** (☎ 613 56; www.knauscamp.de in German; In den Almen 3; site €6-11, person €6) A lakeside camping ground about 3.5km northeast of the centre.

**Marktschänke** (☎ 952 60; www.bd-marktschaenke.de in German; s/d from €47/72; ☐) An especially friendly, family-run hotel with seven extra-large rooms and a playfully cluttered, rustic restaurant specialising in regional dishes (mains €6 to €18). About 250m southwest of the Hauptbahnhof.

**Hotel Weingarten** (☎ 940 10; www.hotelweingarten.de in German; Triftweg 11a-13; s/d from €57.50/82; ☎ reception closed after 2pm Sun; ☐ ☒) This aptly named, 18-room place, 1km northeast of the Bahnhof, offers excellent value. Most of the lovingly cared-for rooms have balconies. Welcome extras include a sauna (€6).

**GETTING AROUND**

Bikes can be rented around the corner from the tourist office at a **house** (☎ 63447; Schlossgartenstrasse 3; per day €8) with no sign out front. It's best to phone ahead.



## AHR VALLEY & THE EIFEL

The Eifel, a rural area of gentle hills, tranquil villages and volcanic lakes, makes for a great respite from the mass tourism of the Moselle and Rhine Valleys. Its subtle charms are best sampled on a bike ride or a hike, though it also has a few headline attractions, including a world-class car-racing track, a stunning Romanesque abbey and a lovely wine region, the Ahr Valley.

The Ahr River has carved a scenic 90km valley stretching from Blankenheim, in the High Eifel, to the Rhine, with which it is confluent near Remagen. This is one of Germany's few red-wine regions – growing *Spätburgunder* (Pinot Noir), in particular – with vineyards clinging to steeply terraced slopes along both banks. The quality is high but the yield small, so very few wine labels ever make it beyond the valley – all the more reason to visit and try them for yourself.

### Getting Around

The best way to travel through the Ahr Valley is on the Ahrthalbahn, an hourly train serving most of the villages between Altenahr and Remagen (35 minutes), and, Monday to Saturday, Bonn. Bus 841 also travels the route but takes twice as long and is rather infrequent. If you're driving, make your way to the B266/B267, which traverses the valley.

The scenic **Rotweinwanderweg** (Red Wine Hiking Trail; [www.ahr-rotweinwanderweg.de](http://www.ahr-rotweinwanderweg.de) in German), marked by small signs with grape icons, takes hikers through vineyard country on its 35km route from Bad Bodendorf to Altenahr via the hills above Bad Neuenahr and Ahrweiler. You can walk as far as you like and then return on the Ahrthalbahn. Tourist offices have a detailed trail description and maps.

Cycling options include the 46km-long **Ahrradweg**, which runs parallel to the Ahr and links Sinzig (on the Rhine) with Blankenheim. Bikes can be taken on the Ahrthalbahn free-of-charge.

### REMAGEN

☎ 02642 / pop 16,000

Remagen, 20km south of Bonn, was founded by the Romans in AD 16 as Rigomagus, but the town would hardly figure in the his-

tory books were it not for one fateful day in early March 1945. As the Allies raced across France and Belgium to rid Germany of Nazism, the *Wehrmacht* (armed services of the Third Reich) tried frantically to stave off defeat by destroying all bridges across the Rhine. But the steel rail bridge at Remagen lasted long enough for Allied troops to cross the river, contributing significantly to the collapse of Hitler's western front. One of the bridge's surviving basalt towers now houses the **Friedensmuseum** (Peace Museum; ☎ 201 46; [www.bruecke-remagen.de](http://www.bruecke-remagen.de); adult/concession €3.50/1; ☹ 10am-5pm early Mar-late Nov, to 6pm May-Oct), with an exhibit about Remagen's pivotal role in WWII.

### BAD NEUENAHR & AHRWEILER

☎ 02641 / pop 28,000

Bad Neuenahr and Ahrweiler are a bit of an odd couple. Bad Neuenahr is an elegant spa town whose healing waters have been sought out by the moneyed and the famous (including Karl Marx and Johannes Brahms) for a century and a half. Ahrweiler, by contrast, is a dreamy medieval village encircled by a town wall and crisscrossed by narrow, pedestrianised lanes that are lined with half-timbered houses. What the two do have in common, however, is wine, which can be enjoyed in both towns at taverns and restaurants.

### Orientation

From Ahrweiler's Hauptbahnhof, walk 600m west along Wilhelmstrasse to get to the old town; more convenient is the Ahrweiler Markt train stop, just north of the old town.

From the Hauptbahnhof in Bad Neuenahr, it's a five-minute walk to the centre, which is around car-free Poststrasse.

### Information

**Let's Play** (Ahrhüttenstrasse 23, Ahrweiler; per hr €3; ☹ 9am-11pm) Internet access near the tourist office; you must be over 18.

**Post office** (cnr Hauptstrasse & Kölner Strasse, Bad Neuenahr)

**Tourist offices** (☎ 91710; [www.ahrtaletourismus.de](http://www.ahrtaletourismus.de) in German) Ahrweiler (Blankartshof 1; ☹ 9.30am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun mid-Apr-mid-Nov, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat & Sun mid-Nov-mid-Apr); Bad Neuenahr (Hauptstrasse 114; ☹ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat & Sun) Both sell walking and cycling maps of the area.

### Sights & Activities

#### AHRWEILER

Ahrweiler preserves a delightful, pedestrianised **Altstadt** almost entirely encircled by a medieval **town wall** with four surviving gates. The focal point is the Marktplatz and its yellow Gothic church, **Pfarrkirche St Laurentius**, beautifully decorated with floral frescoes from the 14th century and luminous stained-glass windows, some of which show farmers working their vineyards. Of the many half-timbered buildings, pride of place goes to **Haus Wolff** (Niederhüttenstrasse 42), a block east of the church, which is festooned with a knock-out octagonal oriel.

Ahrweiler's Roman roots spring to life at the **Museum Roemervilla** (Roman Villa Museum; ☎ 5311; Am Silberberg 1; adult/student/family €3.60/1.80/7.20; ☹ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun late Mar-mid-Nov) on the northwest edge of town. Protected by a lofty glass and wood structure are 1st- to 3rd-century ruins – a veritable Rhenish Pompeii – that reveal the remarkable standard of living enjoyed by wealthy Romans. A detailed English pamphlet is included in the price.

#### BAD NEUENAHR

The focal point of Bad Neuenahr, bisected by the Ahr, is the stately **Kurhaus**, an Art Nouveau structure built in 1903 that houses the **Spielbank** (casino; ☎ 757 50; [www.spielbank-bad-neuenahr.de](http://www.spielbank-bad-neuenahr.de), in German; Felix-Rütten-Strasse 1; ☹ 2pm-2am), the first to open in post-WWII Germany. Night after night, an elegant crowd (jacket required for men) mingles among the roulette and blackjack tables or tries its luck at the 'one-armed bandits'. Bring your passport and a lucky charm. The nearby **river banks** are great for strolling.

Neuenahr owes its 'Bad reputation' (ie its spa status) to its mineral springs, whose soothing qualities can be experienced in the **Ahr-Thermen** (☎ 801 200; [www.ahrthermen.de](http://www.ahrthermen.de), in German; Felix-Rütten-Strasse 3; per 2hr €10, day pass €14, sauna extra €4; ☹ 9am-11pm). Besides swimming pools, options include a surge channel, massage jets and all sorts of saunas. Various discounts are available.

### Sleeping & Eating

The town centres of Bad Neuenahr and Ahrweiler teem with traditional German restaurants.

**DJH hostel** (☎ 349 24; [www.jugendherberge.de](http://www.jugendherberge.de); St-Plus-Strasse 7; dm €18, d per person €23.50; ☹) This modern, 140-bed hostel is on the south bank

of the Ahr about midway between Ahrweiler and Bad Neuenahr (1.5km from each). All rooms have private bathrooms.

**Hotel Garni Schützenhof** (☎ 90283; [www.schuetzenhof-ahrweiler.de](http://www.schuetzenhof-ahrweiler.de), in German; Schützenstrasse 1, Ahrweiler; s/d from €46/70; ☎ ☹) Facing the Ahrtor, one of Ahrweiler's landmark town gates, this unpretentious family-run hotel has 14 spacious rooms. Offers excellent value.

**Hotel-Restaurant Hohenzollern** (☎ 4268; [www.hotelhohenzollern.com](http://www.hotelhohenzollern.com); Am Silberberg 50, Ahrweiler; s €65-80, d €108-143; ☎ ☹) This elegant hillside hotel, right on the Rotweinwanderweg, has unbeatable valley views and a gourmet restaurant (mains €16 to €28). From Ahrweiler's Museum Roemervilla, head up the 1½-lane road through the forest.

**Apbell's** (☎ 900 243; Niederhüttenstrasse 27a, Ahrweiler; mains €7-15.50; ☹ closed Mon & Jan) The menu here has something in store for all tastes and budgets, including *Haxe* (leg of pig) and five options for kids. In fine weather, the chestnut-shaded beer garden has the nicest tables.

**Eifelstube** (☎ 348 50; Ahrhüttenstrasse 26, Ahrweiler; mains €9.50-15, 3-course lunch €14.50; ☹ closed Tue & Wed) In the same family since 1905, this is one of Ahrweiler's best restaurants. Sample upmarket German and regional specialities while seated in the cosy dining room with beam ceiling and tiled stove. Around the corner facing the tourist office, the affiliated **Bistro** (closed Tuesday) has cheaper fare such as *Flammkuchen* (Alsation-style pizza), salads and cakes.

### Getting There & Away

Rail travel from the Ahrweiler Markt, Ahrweiler and Bad Neuenahr train stations to Koblenz (€11 or €12, 42 to 67 minutes, hourly) requires a change at Remagen. Direct trains from all three stations serve Bonn (€6.20, 40 minutes, hourly).

### ALTENAHR

☎ 02643 / pop 1700

Hemmed in on all sides by craggy peaks giving way to rolling hills and steep vineyards, Altenahr wins top honours as the most romantic location in the Ahr Valley. The landscape is best appreciated by taking a 10-minute uphill walk to the 11th-century **Burgruine Are**, a ruined hilltop castle, whose weather-beaten stone tower stands guard over the valley.

Altenahr is the western terminus of the **Rotweinwanderweg** (opposite). A dozen more

trails can be picked up either in the village centre or at the top of the **Ditschardhöhe**, whose 'peak', at 354m, is most easily reached by **chairlift** (☎ 8383; up/return adult €3/4.50, child 3-14yr €2/2.50; ☎ 10am-5pm or later, closes earlier in stormy weather, Easter-Oct). Kids may enjoy the summer **Rodelbahn** (toboggan run).

Altenahr's **tourist office** (☎ 8448; www.altenahr-ahr.de in German; ☎ 9am-noon & 12.30-4pm or 4.30pm Mon-Fri, to 3.30pm Fri, also 10am-1pm Sat mid-Apr-May & Aug-Oct) is inside the Bahnhof (train station).

## Sleeping & Eating

**Campingplatz Altenahr** (☎ 8503; www.camping-altenahr.de; Im Pappelalee; per tent & car/person €7/4.50; ☎ Apr-Oct). A green, grassy camping ground.

**DJH hostel** (☎ 1880; www.jugendherberge.de; Langfigtal 8; dm €17; ☎) Altenahr's 92-bed hostel, completely renovated in 2006, is beautifully located in the Langfigtal nature park.

**Hotel-Restaurant Zum Schwarzen Kreuz** (☎ 1534; www.zumschwarzenkreuz.de; Brückenstrasse 5-7; s €38-70, d €58-100; ☎ ☎) In a neat half-timbered building in the heart of town, this 60-bed place offers original retro flair with flowery wallpaper; some rooms even have groovy tapestries. The restaurant does regional specialities (mains €9 to €18) and *Flammkuchen*.

## Getting There & Away

The Ahrtalbahn train serves villages between Altenahr and Remagen (35 minutes, hourly); on Monday to Saturday it goes to Bonn. Bus 841 also travels the route but takes twice as long and is rather infrequent.

## NÜRBURGRING

This historic **Formula One race car track** (☎ 02691-302 630; www.nuerburgring.de) has hosted many spectacular races with legendary drivers since its completion in 1927. Its 20.8km, 73-curve **Nordschleife** (North Loop) was not only the longest circuit ever built but also one of the most difficult, earning the respectful moniker 'Green Hell' from racing legend Jackie Stewart. After Niki Lauda's near-fatal crash in 1976, the German Grand Prix moved to the Hockenheimring near Mannheim but in 1995 Formula One returned to the 5km South Loop, built in 1984.

If you have your own car or motorbike, you can discover your inner Michael (Schumacher, that is) by taking a spin around the North Loop for €14 per round. Those who lack a really fast vehicle and/or prefer to let someone

else do the driving can take the **BMW Ring-Taxi** (☎ 932 020, staffed 10am-noon Mon-Fri; http://ring-taxi.bmw-motorsport.com; ☎ Mar-Nov, call for exact days). For €175, up to three people (children must be at least 150cm tall) pile into a 507hp BMW M5, which goes from 0km/h to 100km/h in under five seconds, and are 'chauffeured' around the North Loop by a professional driver at speeds of up to 320km/h. It's hugely popular so make reservations early.

Right by the track is the **Erlebniswelt** (☎ 302 698; adult/child 6-14yr €11/7.50; ☎ 10am-6pm), an automotive theme park where you'll learn about the history and mythology of the Nürburgring and can participate in interactive entertainments and simulators. One hall houses the 450m **Kartbahn** (www.karterlebniswelt.de; per 10/30min €11/26; ☎ 11am-8pm, shorter hours in winter), a go-kart track where you get to experience what 60km/h feels like with your tail just 3cm above the asphalt.

The Nürburgring is off the B258, reached via the B257 from Altenahr.

## MARIA LAACH

About 25km northwest of Koblenz, **Abteikirche Maria Laach** (Maria Laach Abbey Church; ☎ 02652-590; www.marialaach.de, in German; admission free; ☎ 5am-8pm) is one of the finest examples of Romanesque architecture in Germany. It's part of a nine-century-old Benedictine abbey, and sits at the edge of a forest and next to a volcanic lake, the **Laacher See**, which is surrounded by a 21-sq-km nature reserve.

You enter the church via a large portico, a feature not usually found north of the Alps. Note the quirky carvings on and above the capitals and the Löwenbrunnen (Lion Fountain), reminiscent of Moorish architecture. The interior is surprisingly modest, in part because the original furnishings were lost during the 1800s. In the west apse lies the late-13th-century tomb of abbey founder Henry II of Palatine (laminated information sheets are available nearby), while the east apse shelters the high altar with its wooden canopy; overhead is an early-20th-century Byzantine-style mosaic of Christ donated by Kaiser Wilhelm II. The entrance to the 11th-century **crypt** (☎ 9-11am & 12.30-5pm Mon-Sat, 12.30-2pm & 3.30-5pm Sun & holidays) is to the left of the choir.

The abbey itself is not open to the public but across the path from the **Gaststätte** (restaurant, a free 20-minute **film** (☎ 9.30-11am & 1-4.30pm except Sun & holiday mornings) looks at the life

of the 55 monks, who take the motto 'Ora et Labora' (pray and work) very seriously indeed. They earn a living from economic activities such as running the abbey's hotel, growing organic apples and raising houseplants (available for purchase in the **hothouses**); and they pray five times a day. Attending **Gottesdienst** (prayer services; hours posted in the church) is worthwhile if only to listen to the ethereal chanting in Latin and German.

Various **trails** take walkers up the hill into the forest; options for circumambulating the Laacher See include the lakefront **Ufer-Rundweg** (8km) and two hillier trails (15km and 21km). You can swim near the camping ground.

Next to the car park is a **grocery** (☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat year-round, 10am-6pm Sun except sometimes in Jan, Feb, Jul & Aug) selling organic fruits, veggies, cheese and meat grown or prepared by the monks.

Maria Laach is served hourly by bus 312 from Mendig, the nearest town with a train station. By car, get off the A61 at the Mendig exit (No 34), 2km from Maria Laach. The car park (€1.50) is across the road from the church.

## THE ROMANTIC RHINE

Between Koblenz and Bingen, the Rhine carves deeply through the Rhenish slate mountains, meandering between hillside castles and steep fields of wine to create a magical atmosphere mixing wonder and legend. This is Germany's landscape at its most dramatic – muscular forested hillsides alternate with craggy cliffs and nearly-vertical terraced vineyards. Idyllic villages appear around each bend, their neat half-timbered houses and proud church steeples seemingly plucked from the world of fairy tales.

High above the river, busy with barge traffic, and the rail lines that run along each bank are the famous medieval castles, some ruined, some restored, all mysterious and vestiges of a time that was anything but tranquil. Most were built by a mafia of local robber barons – knights, princes and even bishops – who extorted tolls from merchant ships by blocking their passage with iron chains. Time and French troops under Louis XIV laid waste to many of the castles but several were restored in the 19th century, when Prussian kings, German poets and British painters discovered

the gorge's timeless beauty. Today, some have been reincarnated as hotels and, in the case of Burg Stahleck, as a hostel (p492).

In 2002 Unesco designated these 65km of riverscape, more prosaically known as the **Oberes Mittelrheintal** (Upper Middle Rhine Valley; www.welterbe-mittelrheintal.de), as a World Heritage Site. One of Germany's most popular tourist destinations, the area is often deluged with visitors, especially in summer and early autumn, but it all but shuts down in winter.

## Activities

### CYCLING

The **Rhein-Radweg** runs along the left (west) bank of the Romantic Rhine and along some sections of the right bank. It links up with two other long-distance bike paths, the **Nahe-Hunsrück-Mosel-Radweg** (www.naheland-radtouren.de in German), which follows the Nahe River from Bingen southwest to Idar-Oberstein and beyond; and the 311km **Mosel-Radweg** (www.mosel-radweg.de in German), which runs along one or the other banks of the Moselle River from Koblenz to the French city of Metz, passing through Bernkastel-Kues, Trier and Luxembourg.

Bicycles can be taken on most regional trains, making it possible to ride one way (eg down the valley) and take the train the other way.

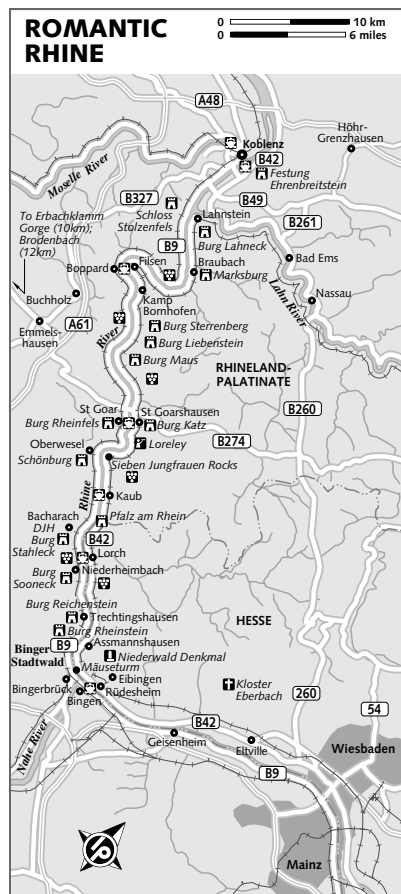
### HIKING

The Rhine Valley is great hiking territory. Each tourist office can supply suggestions and maps for superb local walks.

Four long-distance trails parallel the Rhine between Koblenz and Bingen, continuing downriver to Bonn and upriver to Mainz and beyond. Each bank has a **Rheinhöhenweg** (Rhine Heights Trail), which takes you from hill top to hill top – a bit away from the river – and affords spectacular views. Closer to the Rhine, along the riverbank or on the hillsides just above it, run the new **Rhein-Burgen-Wanderweg** (on the left bank, ie Bingen and Boppard) and the **Rheinsteig** (on the right bank, ie Loreley; www.rheinsteig.de); the latter links Bonn with Wiesbaden, a distance of 320km.

### Festivals & Events

Every river village holds at least one wine festival each year, with most of them crammed into August and September, just before harvest time. The Rhineland-Palatinate **Veranstaltungskalender** (events calendar), which



## Getting There & Away

Koblenz (for transport details see p487) and Mainz (p471) are good starting points for touring the region. If you're pressed for time, you can get a glimpse of the Romantic Rhine on a long day-trip from Frankfurt.

## Getting Around

### BOAT

River travel is a relaxing and very romantic way to see the castles, vineyards and villages of the Romantic Rhine. A boat trip in one direction can be combined with a hike or train trip in the other.

Because of fast currents, shallows, narrow channels and the many passing barges (the Rhine is still an important trade artery), manoeuvring a passenger ferry is a very tricky business – and a fascinating one to see up close. Vessels zipping downriver have priority over those steaming slowly upriver.

From about April to October (winter services are very limited), boats that are run by **Köln-Düsseldorfer** (KD; ☎ Mon-Fri 0221-2088 318, daily 06742-2232; [www.k-d.com](http://www.k-d.com)) link villages such as Bingen, St Goar and Boppard on a set timetable. You can travel to the next village or all the way from Mainz to Koblenz (one-way/return €44.10/50.10, downstream/upstream 5½/8½ hours). Within the segment you've paid for (for example, Boppard-Rüdesheim, which costs €18.80 return), you can get on and off as many times as you like, but make sure to ask for a free stopover ticket each time you disembark.

Many rail passes (such as Eurail) will get you a free ride on normal KD services. However, you still need to obtain a ticket. Children up to the age of four travel for free, while those up to age 13 are charged a flat fee of €3.50. Students under 27 get a 50% discount. Travel on your birthday is free. Return tickets usually cost only slightly more than one-way tickets. There's a €1.50 supplement for travel on the *Goethe*, a Mississippi-style paddle-wheeler.

Several smaller companies, including **Bingen-Rüdesheimer** (☎ 06721-14140; [www.bingen-ruedesheimer.com](http://www.bingen-ruedesheimer.com)) and **Rössler Linie** (☎ 06722-2353; [www.roesslerlinie.de](http://www.roesslerlinie.de)), also run passenger boats up and down the Romantic Rhine.

### BUS & TRAIN

Bus and train travel, perhaps combined with minicruises by boat and car ferry, is a convenient way to go village-hopping along the

Rhine, to get to a trailhead, or to return to your lodgings at the end of a hike or bike ride. All local trains take bicycles for no charge.

Villages on the Rhine's left bank (eg Bingen, Boppard and St Goar) are served hourly by local trains on the Koblenz–Mainz run. Right bank villages such as Rüdesheim, Assmannshausen and St Goarshausen are linked every hour or two by Koblenz–Wiesbaden services. It takes about 1½ hours to travel by train from Koblenz to either Mainz or Wiesbaden.

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

The B9 highway travels along the left bank of the Rhine from Koblenz to Bingen, from where the A60 leads on to Mainz. On the right bank, the B42 hugs the river.

### CAR FERRY

Since there are no Rhine bridges between Koblenz and Mainz (though many locals would like there to be; environmentalists and the ferry companies are, predictably, opposed), the only way to cross the river along this stretch is by **Autofähre** (car ferry). Services operate between Boppard and Filsen/Kamp Bornhofen (runs until 9pm or 10pm, to 8pm in winter); St Goar and St Goarshausen; Bacharach and Kaub; Niederheimbach and Lorch (till 8pm, 7pm in winter); and Bingen and Rüdesheim (till midnight, 10pm in winter).

Prices vary slightly but you can figure on paying about €3 per car, including the driver; €1.30 per foot passenger (€0.70 for a child); and €0.50 for a bicycle. This being well-organised Germany, the fare tables take into account the possibility, however remote, that you might want to bring along a dog (€0.50), cattle (€3 each) or a horse-drawn cart (€4.50, including the driver).

## KOBLENZ

☎ 0261 / pop 108,000

Koblenz is a modern town with ancient roots that go all the way back to the Romans, who founded a military stronghold here around 10 BC. They called it, quite appropriately, *Confluentes* for its supremely strategic value at the spot where the Moselle is confluent with the Rhine.

Today, Koblenz is the economic and commercial centre of the Upper Rhine region. The eminently strollable town, home to two fabulous castles, is the northern gateway to the Romantic Rhine and also affords access to the

outdoor charms of three low mountain ranges – the Hunsrück, the Eifel and the Westerwald – which converge here.

## Orientation

Koblenz' core is shaped like the bow of a ship seen in profile, with the Rhine to the east, the Moselle to the north and the Deutsches Eck right where Leonardo DiCaprio would be kissing Kate Winslet if this were the Titanic. The area's southern border is Friedrich-Ebert-Ring; to the west it's delineated by Hohenfelderstrasse, which leads north to the Balduinbrücke (a bridge spanning the Moselle). The Altstadt is around the northern end of shop-lined, pedestrians-only Lohrstrasse, whose southern, cars-admitted section leads 500m to the Hauptbahnhof.

## Information

**ATM** Inside the Hauptbahnhof.

**Main tourist office** (☎ 313 04; [www.touristik-koblenz.de](http://www.touristik-koblenz.de); Bahnhofplatz 17; ☎ 9am-7pm May-Sep, to 6pm Apr & Oct, 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat Nov-Mar) Across the square and a bit to the right as you exit the Hauptbahnhof. Has an excellent map in English and sells events tickets.

**Post office** (Bahnhofplatz 16; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 7am-2pm Sat)

**Rathaus tourist office** (☎ 130 920; Jesuitenplatz 2; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun May-Sep, to 6pm Apr & Oct, 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, till 4pm Sat Nov-Mar)  
**Reuffel** (Lohrstrasse 62; per 30min €0.60; ☎ 9.30am-7pm Mon-Wed & Fri, to 8pm Thu, to 6pm Sat) A bookshop with English-language books and an internet café upstairs.

**Waschsalon** (Bahnhofstrasse 22; ☎ 6am-11pm) Self-service laundry 400m north of the Hauptbahnhof.

## Sights

### CITY CENTRE

**Lohrstrasse**, Koblenz' main shopping drag, is lined primarily with chain and department stores. Its intersection with Altengraben is known as **Vier Türme** (Four Towers) because each of the 17th-century corner buildings sports a richly detailed façade and an ornately carved and painted oriels.

Turning east on Altengraben takes you to **Am Plan**, a broad square that has undergone various incarnations – as a butchers' market, a stage for religious plays, a place of execution and an arena for medieval tournaments.

The arched walkway at Am Plan's north-eastern corner leads to the **Liebfrauenkirche** (☎ 9am-6pm), in the heart of the Altstadt, which

details all the festivals, is available from tourist offices.

During **Rhein in Flammen** (Rhine in Flames), the region's most famous and spectacular festival series, castles, boats and the river banks, all swathed in glowing illumination, form the backdrop to gargantuan firework displays, best viewed from a **boat** ([www.rhein-river-lights.com](http://www.rhein-river-lights.com) for reservations). Events are held every year in five locations:

**Siebengebirge** (seven hills between Linz & Bonn) First Saturday in May.

**Bingen/Rüdesheim** First Saturday in July.

**Koblenz to Braubach/Spay** Second Saturday in August.

**Oberwesel** Second Saturday in September.

**Loreley rock** (St Goar/St Goarshausen) Third Saturday in September.

was built in a harmonious hotchpotch of styles: of Romanesque origin, it has a Gothic choir and baroque onion-domed turrets. Note the painted vaulting above the central nave.

A block to the north, **Florinsmarkt** is dominated by the **Florinskirche** (☎ 11am-5pm Jun-Aug) and is home to the **Mittelrhein-Museum** (☎ 129 2520; Florinsmarkt 15; adult/concession €2.50/1.50, during special exhibitions €4/2.50; ☎ 10.30am-5pm Tue-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun & holidays), with eclectic displays reflecting the region's history. The collection of 19th-century landscape paintings of the Romantic Rhine by German and British artists is worth a look. For a bit of whimsy, look for the **Augenroller** (eye-roller) figure beneath the façade clock, which rolls its eyes and sticks out its tongue on the hour and half-hour.

Stroll a block north to the Moselle, turn right and follow the riverbank to the **Deutsches Eck**, a promontory built on a sandbank right at the two rivers' point of confluence. It derives its name from the Deutscher Ritterorden (Order of Teutonic Knights), which had its headquarters in the 13th-century building now occupied by the Ludwig Museum. A **statue of Kaiser Wilhelm I** on horseback, in the bombastic style of the late 19th century, dominates the spot. After the original was destroyed in WWII, the empty stone pedestal served as a memorial to German unity – until reunification was achieved in 1990. Bus 1 links the Deutsches Eck with the Hauptbahnhof.

Just south, not far from the riverfront promenade, is the **Deutscherherrenhaus**, which once belonged to the Teutonic Knights. Today it's home to the **Ludwig Museum** (☎ 304 040; www.ludwigmuseum.org in German; Danziger Freiheit 1; adult/concession €2.50/1.50; ☎ 10.30am-5pm Tue-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun & holidays), whose emphasis is on post-1945 and contemporary art from France and Germany. Just beyond are the slender towers of 12th-century **Basilika St Kastor** (☎ 9am-6pm).

Two blocks to the southwest, at **Josef-Görres-Platz**, the captivating **Historiensäule** (History Column) portrays 2000 years of Koblenz history in 10 scenes perched one atop the other – the WWII period, for instance, is represented by a flaming ruin. A nearby panel explains all (in English).

#### FESTUNG EHRENBREITSTEIN

On the right bank of the Rhine looming above the Deutsches Eck, the mighty **Ehrenbreitstein Fortress** (☎ 974 2440; fortress only adult/student & senior €1.10/0.50; ☎ 10am-5pm) proved indestructible to

all but Napoleonic troops, who levelled it in 1801. A few years later, the Prussians took this as a challenge to build one of Europe's mightiest fortifications, completed in 1832.

Behind the stone bulwarks you'll find a DJH hostel, two restaurants and the **Landesmuseum** (☎ 66 750; www.landeseuseumkoblenz.de in German; adult/student & senior ind fortress admission €4/3; ☎ 9.30am-5pm mid-Mar-mid-Nov), with exhibits on the region's economic history, local industries such as tobacco, wine and pumice, and photography. There's also a section about August Horch, founder of the Audi automotive company, who was born in nearby Winningen on the Moselle.

Festung Ehrenbreitstein is accessible by motorcar (it doesn't have to be an Audi). You can also take bus 9 or 10 to the Obertal bus stop, where you can hop on the **Sesselbahn** (chairlift; adult/child 4-14yr & hostel guest €4.20/2.50, return €5.80/3.50). Alternatively, take bus 9 to the Neudorf/Bergstrasse stop, from where it's a 20-minute walk uphill (follow the signs to the DJH hostel). A tiny **passenger steamer** (adult €1.30; ☎ till 6pm or 7pm approx Easter-mid-Nov) links the right-bank Ehrenbreitstein quarter, below the fortress, with the left-bank's Rheinpromenade.

#### SCHLOSS STOLZENFELS

With its crenellated towers, ornate gables and medieval-style fortifications, **Schloss Stolzenfels** (☎ 516 56; adult/concession obligatory guided tour €2.60/1.30; ☎ 9am-6pm Apr-Sep, 9am-5pm Jan-Mar & Oct-Nov, closed on the 1st work day of each week), 5km south of the town centre, exudes the timeless, sentimental beauty for which the Romantic Rhine is famed. In 1823, the future Prussian king Friedrich Wilhelm IV fell under its spell and had the castle – ruined by the French – rebuilt as his summer residence; during the Victorian era, guests included Queen Victoria. Today, the rooms remain largely as the king left them, with paintings, weapons, armour and furnishings from the mid-19th century.

To get there, take bus 650 from the Hauptbahnhof to the castle car park, from where it's a 15-minute walk.

#### Sleeping

**Campingplatz Rhein-Mosel** (☎ 827 19; www.camping-rhein-mosel.de; Scharfwiesenweg 6; per adult/tent/car €4.50/2.50/3; ☎ Apr-mid-Oct) On the north bank of the Moselle, right opposite the Deutsches Eck. Linked to the city centre by a passenger ferry.

**DJH hostel** (☎ 972 870; www.jugendherberge.de; dm €17, d €47; ☎ ☒) A modern, 183-bed place inside historic Ehrenbreitstein Fortress. Some rooms have private bathroom. See Festung Ehrenbreitstein (opposite) for transport details.

**Hotel Jan van Werth** (☎ 36 500; www.hoteljanvanwerth.de, in German; Von-Werth-Strasse 9; s/d €41/62, without bathroom €23/48) A favourite with backpackers on a budget, this guesthouse-like establishment has a lobby that feels like someone's living room and 16 rooms with 22 beds. Offers exceptional value – no surprise that it's often booked-out, especially when the weather's good. Situated four blocks north of the Hauptbahnhof and one block south of Friedrich-Ebert-Ring.

**Hotel Hamm** (☎ 303 210; www.hotel-hamm.de; St-Josef-Strasse 32-34; s €52-64, d €65-93, q €120; ☎ ☒ ☒) Unpretentious and unsurprising, this 35-room hotel, while hardly exhilarating, is popular with businesspeople and offers good value. In a residential area three blocks south of the Hauptbahnhof and 1.5km from the Altstadt, to which it's linked by bus 1.

**Contel Koblenz** (☎ 406 50; www.contel-koblenz.de; Pastor-Klein-Strasse 19; s/d from €71/76, buffet breakfast €10; ☎ ☒) This 185-room hotel's exuberant bad taste begins with the electric blue façade and gets wilder inside – some new outrage against bourgeois good taste awaits around every corner! About a third of the rooms have kitchenettes with tiny fridges and three come with waterbeds. Situated 1km west along the Moselle from the Altstadt; served by bus 3, whose nearest stop is Ludwig-Erhard-Strasse.

**Diehl's Hotel** (☎ 970 70; www.diehls-hotel.de; Rheinsteigufener 1; s €57-95, d €74-120, breakfast €12.50; ☎ ☒ ☒) A family-run hotel on the Rhine's east bank. Has a 1980s vibe and 57 comfortable rooms, all offering watery views of Koblenz. The restaurant has a gorgeous terrace overlooking the Rhine – perfect for a romantic sunset dinner. Situated about 1km south of Festung Ehrenbreitstein.

#### Eating & Drinking

Many of Koblenz' restaurants and pubs are in the Altstadt, eg around and northeast of Münzplatz, and along the Rhine. Diehl's Hotel has a romantic restaurant.

**Kaffeewirtschaft** (☎ 914 4702; Münzplatz 14; mains €5.50-12.50, salads €4.50-8.50; ☎ 9am-midnight Mon-Fri, 9am-2am Sat, 10am-midnight Sun) A hip café with minimalist designer décor, old marble tables

and daily specials, including vegetarian options, that take advantage of whatever's in season.

**Cafe Miljöo** (☎ 142 37; Gemüsegasse 12; salads €6-8; ☎ 9am-2am Sun-Fri, 8am-2am Sat) Miljöo, pronounced like the French word milieu, is a cosy bistrolike café, decorated with changing exhibits of original art and fresh flowers. It serves a wide selection of coffees, teas and homemade cakes. Breakfast is available until 5pm.

**Weindorf** (☎ 133 7190; Julius-Wegeler-Strasse 2-4; mains €6-17; ☎ 10am-1am, warm food till 11pm, from 4pm Nov-Apr) Sure, this little 'wine village', with its four cute, half-timbered German-style restaurants, is a post-WWII reconstruction of a 1925 replica of the 'real thing' (whatever that is), but the quality of the food remains high and prices are fair. Only the service needs improving.

**Elsa's Cuisine** (☎ 133 8868; Paradies 2; mains €12.50-26; ☎ 6pm-midnight, last order 10pm) Provence meets Joburg at this homy, welcoming restaurant, which serves up innovative French cooking with South African flair. Carnivorous options include crocodile, ostrich, kangaroo and bison.

**Irish Pub** (☎ 973 7797; www.irish-pub-koblenz.de; Burgstrasse 7; ☎ 4pm-2am or 3am Mon-Fri, 1pm-2am or 3am Sat & Sun) A Koblenz institution since 1985, this place is a favourite with English speakers. Monday is quiz night (from 9pm) and there's karaoke every Wednesday (from 9pm). Screens major sports events and hosts live music six to eight times a month, usually on Friday or Saturday (9pm to 1am).

Self-catering options:

**Aldi supermarket** (Bahnhofstrasse 50; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm Sat) Two blocks north of the Hauptbahnhof.

**Rizza** (Rizzastrasse 49; ☎ 7.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 7.30am-4pm Sat) Fresh fruit and veggies three blocks north of the Hauptbahnhof.

#### Getting There & Away

Koblenz' Hauptbahnhof is served by frequent IC trains going north to such cities as Bonn and Cologne and south to Mainz, Frankfurt and beyond. Regional trains go to Trier and villages on both banks of the Romantic Rhine, including Bingen (€10, 50 minutes). Some of the Rhine villages are also served by buses that stop outside the Hauptbahnhof – bus 650 goes to Boppard via Schloss Stolzenfels while bus 570 goes to Braubach/Marksburg.

Several boat operators have docks along Konrad-Adenauer-Ufer, on the Rhine just south of the Deutsches Eck.

A number of highways converge in Koblenz, including the B9 from Cologne/Bonn. The nearest autobahns are the A61 (Koblenz-Nord exit) and the A48/A1 to Trier.

### Getting Around

To avoid parking fees you can leave your vehicle at a Park & Ride lot – options include Sporthalle-Stadion Oberwerth, 2.5km south of the Hauptbahnhof next to the stadium, from where bus 1 goes to the city centre.

Bus trips in the city centre cost €1.40; longer trips (eg to the hostel or Schloss Stolzenfels) are €2.10. Day passes cost €3.15/4.20 for one/two zones.

### BRAUBACH

☎ 02627 / pop 3200

Framed by vineyards and rose gardens, the snug 1300-year-old town of Braubach, about 8km south of Koblenz on the right bank, unfolds against the dramatic backdrop of the **Marksburg** (☎ 206; www.marksburg.de; adult/student/child €4.50/4/3.50; ☎ 10am–5pm Apr–Oct, 11am–4pm Nov–Mar). This hilltop castle's main claim to fame is that it has never been destroyed, thanks in large part to several layers of fortification added by a succession of counts and landgraves. The tour takes in the citadel, the Gothic hall and the large kitchen plus a grisly torture chamber, with its hair-raising assortment of pain-inflicting nasties.

Bus 570 goes from Koblenz' Hauptbahnhof to Braubach, from where it's a 20-minute uphill walk to the castle.

### BOPPARD

☎ 06742 / pop 16,000

Thanks to its outdoor options, historic sites and scenic location on a horseshoe bend in the river, Boppard (bo-part), about 20km south of Koblenz, is a very worthwhile stop. A gateway to lots of great hikes in the Hunsrück, it's also a real town complete with a small cinema and travel agencies where locals can book flights to where you're from. Be sure to sample the excellent riesling from grapes grown near here in some of the Rhine's steepest vineyards.

### Information

**ATMs** On the Marktplatz behind the tourist office.

**Call-Shop** (Oberstrasse 99; per hr €2; ☎ 10.30am–

8.30pm or later Mon–Sat, 2–8.30pm Sun) Has internet access.

**Post office** (Heerstrasse 177)

**Tourist office** (☎ 3888; www.boppard.de; Marktplatz; ☎ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–1pm Sat May–Sep, 8am–4pm Mon–Fri Oct–Apr) Inside the Altes Rathaus. Lists of hotels and cultural events and a map are posted outside.

### Sights

Just off Boppard's main commercial street, the pedestrianised, east–west oriented **Oberstrasse**, is the ancient **Marktplatz**, whose fountain is a favourite local hang-out. Still home to a market on Friday mornings, it's dominated by the twin towers of the late Romanesque **Severuskirche**, an elegant 13th-century church built on the site of Roman military baths. Inside are polychrome wall paintings, a hanging cross from 1225 and spiderweb-like vaulted ceilings.

Half-a-block east of the church, the cutest of Boppard's half-timbered buildings, built in 1519, now houses a tearoom called **Teehäusje** (☎ 5798; Untere Marktstrasse 10; ☎ 9.30am–12.30pm Mon–Sat, 2.30pm or 3–6pm daily).

A couple of blocks east, in a 14th-century palace, the **Museum der Stadt Boppard** (☎ 103 69; Burgstrasse; admission free; ☎ 10am–12.30pm & 1.30–5pm Tue–Sun Apr–Oct) has displays on local history and an entire floor dedicated to bentwood furniture (see boxed text, opposite).

Along the riverfront is the **Rheinallee**, a promenade lined with ferry docks, neatly painted hotels and wine taverns. There are grassy areas and a **children's playground** a bit upriver from the car-ferry dock.

A block south of the Marktplatz, the **Römer-Kastell** (Roman Fort; cnr Angertstrasse & Kirchgasse; admission free; ☎ 24hr), also known as the Römerpark, has 55m of the original 4th-century Roman wall and graves from the Frankish era (7th century). A wall panel shows what the Roman town of Bodobrica looked like 1700 years ago.

### Activities

For a spectacular view that gives you the illusion of looking at four lakes instead of a single river, take the 20-minute **Sesselbahn** (☎ 2510; up/return €4.20/6.20; ☎ 9.30am–6.30pm Apr–Oct) from the downriver edge of town up to the **Vierseeblick** viewpoint. The nearby **Gedeonseck** affords views of the Rhine's hairpin curve.

The new **Klettersteig** (admission free; ☎ 24hr), which begins near the Sesselbahn, is a 2½– to

### CLASSIC, MODERN & TIMELESS

Faced with fickle fashion trends, few furniture styles retain their freshness and popularity for long. A rare exception is bentwood furniture, invented by a Boppard-born cabinetmaker named Michael Thonet (1796–1871; tone-et).

Whether in modern-day Paris-style cafés or Toulouse Lautrec paintings of real *fin de siècle* Paris cafés, we've all seen Thonet's minimalist Chair Number 14 looking curvaceous, elegant and sturdy. The secret of this model, of which tens of millions have been produced, and all other bentwood pieces, lies in a production process that involves stacking strips of veneer, soaking them in hot glue so they become pliable, and then drying them in the desired shape in metal moulds. Thonet began his experiments in his Boppard shop in about 1830 but it was the 1851 Great Exhibition in London's Crystal Palace that catapulted him and his Vienna-based firm, soon to be known as Gebrüder Thonet, into prominence.

Exquisite bentwood furniture produced by Thonet during the 19th century can be seen in the **Museum der Stadt Boppard** (opposite). **Gebrüder Thonet** (www.thonet.de) is now run by its founders' great-great grandchildren.

three-hour cliffside adventure hike. Decent shoes are a must. If you chicken out at the critical vertical bits – some with ladders – less vertiginous alternatives are available. It's possible to walk back to town via the Vierseeblick.

Even more memorable is the dramatically steep **Hunsrückbahn** train that travels through five tunnels and across two viaducts on its 8km journey from Boppard's Bahnhof to Buchholz (adult/child up to 11 years one-way €2.10/1.20, 15 minutes). Many people hike back to Boppard from here, but Buchholz is also the starting point of an excellent 17km hike via the romantic **Ehrbachklamm Gorge** to Brodenbach, from where you can get back to Boppard by taking bus 301 to Koblenz and then bus 650 to Boppard. Another option: take the hourly bus 626 from Brodenbach to Emmelshausen, and then the Hunsrückbahn back to Boppard (adult/child €3.45/1.75).

The tourist office organises **wine tastings** (5 wines €5; ☎ 8pm Thu Apr–Oct), hosted each month by a different *Weingut* (wine-growing estate).

Bikes can be hired from **Fahrrad Lüdicke** (☎ 4736; Oberstrasse 105; per day €6.50; ☎ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–1pm Sat). The tourist office has lots of material on cycling options.

### Sleeping & Eating

Hotels, cafés and restaurants line the Rheinallee, Boppard's riverfront promenade. To get there by car, follow the signs on the B9 to the *Autofähre* – that is, turn onto Mainzer Strasse at the upriver (eastern) edge of town.

**Campingpark Sonneneck** (☎ 2121; www.campingpark-sonneneck.de; B9 hwy; person/site/car €5.70/3.20/3.20;

☎ Easter–mid-Oct; ☎) Stretching for 2km along the riverfront about 5km downriver from Boppard, this camping ground has modern facilities and a large pool. From Boppard take bus 650 towards Koblenz.

**Hotel Rebstock** (☎ 4876; www.rheinhotel-rebstock.de; Rheinallee 31; s €31–46, d €46–77; ☎ reception 7am–10pm Wed–Sun, 7am–4pm Mon & Tue; ☎) This family-run hotel, on the Rhine facing the car-ferry landing, has 10 bright, spacious rooms, many with river views and some with balconies. The restaurant is top-notch.

**Hotel Günther** (☎ 890 90; www.hotelguenther.de; Rheinallee 40; s €50–82, d €62–98; ☎ closed most of Dec; ☎) Watch boats and barges glide along the mighty Rhine from your balconied room at this bright, welcoming waterfront hotel. It's owned by an American fellow and his German wife, which makes communication a cinch – and explains why the breakfast buffet includes peanut butter.

**Hotel Bellevue** (☎ 1020; www.bellevue-boppard.de; Rheinallee 41; s/d from €86/120, cheaper in winter; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This luxurious, Best Western-affiliated hotel, built in grand style in 1910, has 94 highly civilised rooms, most with views of the Rhine.

**Weinhaus Heilig Grab** (☎ 2371; Zelkesgasse 12; snacks €3.50–7; ☎ 3–11pm or later, closed Tue & Christmas–mid-Jan) Across the street from the Hauptbahnhof, Boppard's oldest wine tavern offers a cosy setting for sipping the local rieslings. In summer, you can sit outside under a leafy chestnut canopy. Also has five rooms for rent (doubles €56 to €66).

**Weingut Felsenkeller** (☎ 2154; Mühlthal 21; snacks €4–7; ☎ 3–10pm or later, closed Tue) Across the street

from the chairlift station and next to a little stream, this place serves its own and other local growers' wines.

**Severus Stube** (☎ 3218; Untere Marktstrasse 7; mains €7-12.50; ☹ closed Thu) Serves up good-value German food under rustic beam ceilings.

The **Penny Markt supermarket** (Oberstrasse 171; ☹ 7am-8pm Mon-Sat) sells picnic supplies.

## ST GOAR

☎ 06741 / pop 3100

St Goar, 10km upriver of Boppard and 28km downriver from Bingen, is lorded over by the sprawling ruins of **Burg Rheinfels** (☎ 383; Schlossberg; adult/child 6-14yr €4/2; ☹ 9am-6pm Apr-mid-Oct, to 5pm mid-Oct-early Nov, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun in good weather early Nov-Mar), once the mightiest fortress on the Rhine. Built in 1245 by Count Dieter V of Katzenelnbogen as a base for his toll-collecting operations, its size and labyrinthine layout is truly astonishing. Not only kids will love exploring the subterranean tunnels and galleries. To get there, you can walk for 20 minutes up the hill from the youth hostel, drive (parking fee required) or, from April to October, take the Burgexpress tourist train (€3 return, every 25 minutes).

Another kid-pleasing stop is the **Deutsches Puppen- und Teddymuseum** (German Doll & Teddy Bear Museum; ☎ 7270; Sonnengasse 8; adult/child 4-11yr/youth 12-17yr €3.50/1.50/2.50; ☹ 10am-5pm Apr-Dec).

The Protestant **Stiftskirche** (Am Marktplatz), across the street from the Bahnhof, is known for its late Gothic murals, neat vaulting and Romanesque crypt.

Walking options include the **Panoramaweg** – follow the signs from the Rathaus.

The **tourist office** (☎ 383; www.st-goar.de; Heerstrasse 86; ☹ 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Oct-Apr, closes 2pm Fri Nov-Mar, also open 10am-noon Sat May-Sep), on the pedestrianised main street, can supply you with a map for the Via Sancti Goaris city-centre walking tour.

## Sleeping & Eating

**DJH hostel** (☎ 388; www.jugendherberge.de; Bismarkweg 17; dm €13.50; ☹ reception 7am-10pm; ☹) This old-style hostel is at the northern end of town, on the hillside below Burg Rheinfels.

**Hotel Zur Loreley** (☎ 1614; www.hotel-zur-loreley.de; Heerstrasse 87; s €35-45, d €50-68, apt €58-74, all incl breakfast; ☎ ☹) A central and welcoming place to hang your hat, this seven-room hotel has tasteful, modern décor in natural colours, a garage and repair centre for bicycles, and a

variety of lodging options, including eight holiday apartments. Just off the B9 near the Marktplatz.

**Hotel Hauser** (☎ 333; www.hotelhauser.de; Heerstrasse 77; s €26-30, d €52-58; ☹ reception closed Mon Nov-Mar, hotel closed mid-Dec-mid-Jan) Graced with an air of slightly faded gentility, this informal, 13-room hotel, situated next to the Stiftskirche, feels lived-in – and lived-in well, with humour and *joie de vivre*. The restaurant serves regional specialities, including fish.

## ST GOARSHAUSEN & LORELEY

☎ 06771 / pop 1600

St Goar's twin town on the right bank of the Rhine – the two are connected by car ferry – is St Goarshausen, gateway to the most fabled spot along the Romantic Rhine, the **Loreley**. This enormous slab of slate owes its fame to a mythical maiden whose siren songs are said to have lured sailors to their death in the treacherous currents, as poetically portrayed by Heinrich Heine in 1823. At the very tip of a narrow strip of land jutting into the Rhine, a sculpture of the blonde buxom beauty perches lasciviously.

The Loreley outcrop can be reached by car, by shuttle bus (one-way €1.45, hourly from April to October) or via the **Treppenweg** (a steep stairway). At the **Loreley Besucherzentrum** (Visitor Centre; ☎ 599 093; adult/student €2.50/1.50; ☹ 10am-6pm Mar-mid-Nov), which has a tourist office branch inside, exhibits (including an 18-minute 3D film) examine the region's geology, flora and fauna, shipping, wine making, the Loreley myth and the beginnings of Rhine tourism in an engaging, interactive fashion. To the left as you approach the centre, a gravel path leads through the forest to the **Loreleyspitze** (the tip of the Loreley outcrop; admission free; ☹ 24hr), where you'll find spectacular panoramic views, pay-per-view telescopes and a café. Far below, teeny-tiny trains slither along both banks of the Rhine while miniature barges negotiate its waters.

St Goarshausen is also home to two castles. **Burg Maus** (Mouse Castle; www.burg-maus.de, in German), originally called Peterseck, was built by the archbishop of Trier in an effort to counter Count Dieter's toll practices. In a show of medieval muscle-flexing, the latter responded by building a much bigger castle, calling it **Burg Katz** (Cat Castle; closed to the public). And so, to highlight the obvious imbalance of power between count and archbishop, Peterseck

soon came to be known as Burg Maus. These days, Burg Maus (interior closed) houses the **Adler- und Falkenhof** (Eagle & Falcon House; ☎ 7669; adult/child over 6yr/family €6.50/5.50/20; ☹ falconry show 11am & 2.30pm Tue-Sun, also 4.30pm Sun & holidays mid-Mar-early Oct), reached by a 20-minute walk from St Goarshausen-Wellmich.

St Goarshausen has its own **tourist office** (☎ 9100; www.loreley-touristik.de; Bahnhofstrasse 8; ☹ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat Apr-Oct).

## OWERWESEL

☎ 06744 / pop 3200

Oberwesel has lost some of its 'romantic' feel to modern construction and the railway, built in 1857, which runs between the river and a section of the impressive, 3km-long medieval **town wall**. The latter, sporting 16 guard towers, wraps around much of the Altstadt; you can stroll on top of much of it.

Easily spotted on a hillside at the northern end of town is the 14th-century **St-Martins-Kirche**, known as the 'white church', which has painted ceilings, a richly sculpted main altar and a tower that once formed part of the town's defences. In the southern Altstadt, the **Liebfrauenkirche**, known as the 'red church' for the colour of its façade, is older by about 100 years and boasts an impressive carved gold altar.

Each April, Oberwesel crowns, not a **Weinkönigin** (wine queen) as in most towns, but a **Weinhexe** (wine witch) – a good witch, of course, who is said to protect the vineyards. Photos of all the **Weinhexen** crowned since the 1940s are on display in the new **Kulturhaus** (☎ 714 726; Rathausstrasse 23; adult/student €2.50/1.50; ☹ 10am-noon & 2-5pm Tue-Fri, 2-5pm Sat, Sun & holidays), whose well-presented local history museum displays 19th-century engravings of the Romantic Rhine and models of Rhine riverboats. An excellent English visitors' guide is available at reception.

High above the town's southeastern edge is the majestic **Schönburg** castle, saved from total ruin when a New York real estate millionaire purchased it in 1885 (it's now a hotel). Legend has it that this was once the home of seven beautiful but haughty sisters who ridiculed and rejected all potential suitors until they were turned into stone and submerged in the Rhine. If you look closely, you can spot the **Sieben Jungfrauen** (Seven Virgins rocks) from a viewpoint reached via a lovely vineyard trail beginning at the town's northwestern edge.

The **tourist office** (☎ 710 624; www.oberwesel.de; Rathausstrasse 3; ☹ 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Nov-Mar, 10am-2pm Sat Jul-Aug) is across the street from the Rathaus.

Half-timbered **Hotel Römerkrug** (☎ 7091; www.hotel-roemerkrug.rhinecastles.com; Marktplatz 1; s/d €47.50/77.50), run by two generations of a friendly local family, is in the most picturesque part of town, facing the Rathaus. The seven rooms have an antique feel. The restaurant (mains €12 to €24) is closed on Wednesday; in January and February it's only open on the weekend.

Picnic supplies are available at the **Aktiv Markt supermarket** (Koblenzstrasse 1; ☹ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm Sat).

Bicycles can be rented from **Höhn** (☎ 336; Liebfrauenstrasse 38).

## BACHARACH

☎ 06743 / pop 2200

One of the prettiest of the Rhine villages, tiny Bacharach – 24km downriver from Bingen – conceals its considerable charms behind a time-worn, 14th-century wall. From the B9, go through one of the thick arched gateways under the train tracks and you'll find yourself in a medieval village that has exquisite half-timbered mansions such as the **Altes Haus**, the **Posthof** and the off-kilter **Alte Münze** – all are along Oberstrasse, the main street, which runs parallel to the Rhine.

Also on Oberstrasse is the late Romanesque **Peterskirche** (☹ 9.30am-6pm Apr-Oct) with some particularly suggestive capitals. Look for the naked woman with snakes sucking her breasts (a warning about the consequences of adultery) at the end of the left aisle. A path that begins in between the church and the tourist office takes you uphill for 15 minutes to the 12th-century **Burg Stahleck**, now a hostel, and past the filigree ruins of the Gothic **Wernerkapelle**.

The best way to get a sense of the village and its surrounds is to take a walk atop the ramparts – a complete circuit should be possible by 2008. The lookout tower on the upper section of the wall affords panoramic views.

Bacharach's **tourist office** (☎ 919 303; www.rhein-nahe-touristik.de; Oberstrasse 45; ☹ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat, Sun & holidays Apr-Oct, 9am-noon Mon-Fri Nov-Mar) has handy information about the entire area. There's an ATM across Oberstrasse from the church.

## Sleeping & Eating

There are places to eat all along Oberstrasse.

**Campingplatz Sonnenstrand** (☎ 1752; www.camping-sonnenstrand.de; Strandbadweg 9; per person/tent/car €5/3/3; ☞ Apr-Oct) On the Rhine about 500m south of (upriver from) town.

**DJH Burg Stahleck** (☎ 1266; www.jugendherberge.de; Burg Stahleck; dm €17; ☞) In a dream setting inside the medieval Burg Stahleck, this hostel has 166 beds in rooms for one to six people, almost all with private bathrooms.

**Rhein Hotel** (☎ 1243; www.rhein-hotel-bacharach.de; Langstrasse 50; €48-57, d €76-90; ☞ ☞) This homy, family-run hotel, right on the town's medieval ramparts, has 14 well-lit, medium-sized rooms with compact bathrooms and original artwork. Those facing the river, and thus the train tracks, have double double-glazing. The restaurant (mains €9 to €17; closed Tuesday) serves regional dishes.

**Zum Grünen Baum** (☎ 1208; Oberstrasse 63; snacks & light meals €3-7.50) An unpretentious wine tavern serving some of the best wine in town. Try the *Weinkarussell*, a 15-wine sampler (€13.50).

**Posthof** (☎ 599 663; Oberstrasse 45; mains €7.50-16) In the same building as the tourist office, this restaurant serves German and vegetarian dishes, all made with fresh, local products. On balmy summer nights the most coveted tables are in the ancient courtyard.

You can stock up for a picnic at the **Rewe grocery** (Oberstrasse 66; ☞ 8am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-12.30pm Sat).

## BACHARACH TO BINGEN

Along the southernmost stretch of the Romantic Rhine, three impressive castles affording spectacular views grace the craggy left-bank slopes. First up (if you're coming from the north) is the state-owned **Burg Sooneck** (☎ 06743-6064; adult/concession guided tour €2.60/1.30; ☞ 9am-6pm, to 5pm Oct-Mar, closed 1st workday of each week, usually Mon & in Dec), carefully restored in the 19th century and filled with neo-Gothic and Biedermeier furniture and paintings.

Looming above the village of Trechtingshausen, the mighty **Burg Reichenstein** (☎ 06721-6117; www.burg-reichenstein.de in German; adult/child under 12yr €3.50/2.50; ☞ 10am-6pm Mar-mid-Nov, closed Mon except Jul & Aug) now harbours a museum with a prized collection of cast-iron oven slabs, hunting trophies, armoury and furnishings. There's also a restaurant.

The most picturesque of the three is the privately owned **Burg Rheinstein** (☎ 06721-6348;

www.burg-rheinstein.de; adult/child €3.80/2.70; ☞ 9.30am-5.30pm mid-Mar-mid-Nov, 2-5pm Mon-Thu & 10am-5pm Sun mid-Nov-mid-Mar), which in the 1820s became the first Rhine castle to be converted – by Prussian royalty – into a romantic summer residence. The still-functional drawbridge and a portcullis evoke medieval times but the interior is mostly neo-Gothic.

## BINGEN

☎ 06721 / pop 24,700

Thanks to its strategic location at the confluence of the Nahe and Rhine Rivers, Bingen has been coveted by warriors and merchants since its founding by the Romans in 11 BC. Scarred by war and destruction many times, these days it's an attractive town and is considerably less touristy than some of its neighbours.

Bingen was the birthplace of the writer Stefan George (1868-1933) and, more notably, the adopted home of Hildegard von Bingen (see boxed text, opposite).

Locals are immensely proud that between mid-April and mid-October 2008, Bingen has been selected to host Rhineland-Palatinate's quadrennial **Landesgartenschau** (State Garden Show; www.landessgartenschau-bingen-2008.de).

## Orientation & Information

Bingen's centre is along the left (south) bank of the Rhine just east of where it is joined by the Nahe River. The town has two train stations: the Hauptbahnhof, a bit west of the Nahe in Bingerbrück; and the smaller Bahnhof Bingen Stadt, a bit east of the town centre.

**Post office** (Am Fruchtmarkt)

**Tourist office** (☎ 184 205; www.bingen.de; Rheinkai 21; ☞ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat Easter-Oct, 10am-1pm Sun May-Oct, 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-4pm Mon-Thu, 10am-1pm Fri Nov-Easter) Facing the Rhine 250m west of Bahnhof Bingen Stadt. Has brochures and maps for hikers and cyclists.

## Sights

Bingen's commercial centre is on and around pedestrians-only Basiliakastrasse, named after **Basilika St Martin**, a 15th-century, Gothic-style church – built on the site of a Roman temple – at its western end. Up the hillside is the town's most prominent landmark, **Burg Klopp**, an imposing castle restored in the late 19th century. The views are superb and the terrace is the perfect spot for a first kiss – or a 10,000th. To get a bit higher you can climb the **tower** (admission free; ☞ 8am-6pm in the warm months), which

proudly flies the town's red-and-white flag. The old Roman well seems bottomless (it's actually 52m deep).

The modern **Historisches Museum am Strom** (☎ 991 531; Museumsstrasse 3; adult/concession €3/2; ☞ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) occupies a former power station right on the Rhine. One section traces the life and achievements of Hildegard von Bingen (see boxed text below); there are few actual objects on display but the panelling, in German and English, is informative. Another highlight is a set of surgical instruments – from scalpels and cupping glasses to saws – left behind by a Roman doctor in the 2nd century AD. Idealised visions of the Rhine area, both engraved and painted, are the focus of several rooms dedicated to Rhine romanticism.

High atop the **Rochsburg** (Rochus Hill), 2.5km southeast up Rochusallee from the tourist office, is the neo-Gothic **Rochuskapelle**, a pilgrimage church – last rebuilt in the late 1800s – with a very sharp steeple and a splendid canopied altar showing scenes from the life of Hildegard von Bingen. About 400m nearer Bingen is the **Hildegard Forum** (☎ 181 0012; Rochusweg 1; admission free; ☞ 11am-6pm Tue-Sun), run by nuns in black-and-white habits, which houses Hildegard exhibits, a medieval herb garden and a **restaurant** (☞ lunch 11.30am-2pm, café 2-5pm Tue-Sun) serving wholesome foods prepared just the way Hildegard liked them, including dishes made with spelt, her favourite grain. The area is linked to Bahnhof Bingen Stadt at least hourly by City-Linie bus 607.

## HILDEGARD VON BINGEN

She's hip and holistic, a composer, a dramatist and a courageous campaigner for the rights of women. She heals with crystals and herbs, her music frequently hits the New Age charts...and she's been dead for more than 800 years.

Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179) was born in Bermersheim (between Worms and Alzey), the 10th child of a well-off and influential family. At the age of three she experienced the first of the visions that would occur over the course of her extraordinary – and extraordinarily long – life. As a young girl she entered the convent at Disibodenberg on the Nahe River and eventually became an abbess, founding two abbeys of her own: Rupertsberg, above Bingen, in 1150; and Eibingen, across the Rhine near Rudesheim, in 1165. During her preaching tours – an unprecedented activity for women in medieval times – she lectured both to the clergy and the common people, attacking social injustice and ungodliness.

Pope Eugen III publicly endorsed Hildegard, urging her to write down both her theology and her visionary experiences. This she did in a remarkable series of books that encompass ideas as diverse as cosmology, natural history and female orgasm. Her overarching philosophy was that humankind is a distillation of divinity and should comport itself accordingly. Her accomplishments are even more remarkable considering her life-long struggle against feelings of worthlessness and the physical effects of her mysterious visions, which often left her near death.

On an island near the confluence of the Nahe and Rhine is the **Mäuseurm** (Mouse Tower; closed to the public) where, according to legend, Hatto II, the 10th-century archbishop of Mainz, was devoured alive by mice as punishment for his oppressive rule. In reality, the name is a mutation of *Mautturm* (toll tower), which was the building's medieval function.

The monumental statue on the wine slopes across the Rhine portrays a triumphant **Germania** (see p494).

## Activities

Eight short **day-hike circuits**, including several through the vineyards, begin at the car park across Rosegartenweg from the Hildegard Forum. Possible walking destinations from Bingen include **Trechttingshausen** (11km). You can also explore the **Binger Stadtwald**, a large forested area northwest of Bingerbrück.

Bingen is the meeting point of two major long-distance bike paths, the **Rhein-Radweg**, which hugs the Rhine's left bank, and the **Nahe-Hunsrück-Mosel-Radweg**, which follows the Nahe River to Idar-Oberstein.

## Sleeping

Quite a few inexpensive places to sleep can be found on and around Basiliakastrasse.

**DJH hostel** (☎ 32 163; www.jugendherberge.de; Herterstrasse 51, Bingerbrück; dm €18; ☞) Totally renovated in 2006, this 119-bed hostel is a 10-minute walk from the Hauptbahnhof. It has rooms for one to six people, all with bathrooms.

**Hotel-Café Köppel** (☎ 147 70; www.hotel-koeppe.de; Kapuzinerstrasse 12; s €45-55, d €65-78, s/d without bathroom €30/50; P) In the heart of town across from the Kapuzinerkirche, this place has a stylish, cheerful café whose cakes will make your eyes go wide; its rooms are modest but spotless and well-kept.

**Hotel Martinskeller** (☎ 134 75; www.hotel-bingen-rhein.com; Martinsstrasse 1-3; s €67-74, d €85-103; P X) Creative use of some rather odd spaces gives this family-run, 15-room hotel, two blocks up the hill from the tourist office, a quirky but personal vibe. The comfortable rooms are big and each is unique – one is African-inspired, another a bit English.

### Eating & Drinking

**Gaggianer** (☎ 14882; Badergasse 36; mains from €6; ☎ 4-11pm, closed Tue) This friendly, informal restaurant, a block east of the Nahe, serves salads and full meals in a leafy beer garden and a rustic dining room, the latter chock full of antique kitchen utensils donated by friends and clients. A speciality is *Zipfelchen* (potato dough filled with fresh white cheese, cream cheese and herbs).

**Burg Klopp Restaurant** (☎ 156 44; Burg Klopp 1; mains €12.50-19.50; ☎ lunch & dinner) One of Bingen's most elegant restaurants. Right in the castle with lovely city and Rhine views, it serves Mediterranean-inspired cuisine, including fish and vegetarian options.

**Zum Alten Simp'l** (Salzgasse; ☎ from 6pm or 7pm, closed Tue) A pub especially beloved by local students.

### Getting Around

Bicycles can be rented from **Fahrrad Becker** (☎ 922 110; www.fahrradbecker.de in German; Koblenzer Strasse 43-45, Bingerbrück; ☎ 10am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, shorter hours in winter).

## RÜDESHEIM

☎ 06722 / pop 9900

Rüdeshheim, capital of the Rheingau (famous for its superior riesling), is on the Rhine's right bank just across from Bingen, to which it's connected by passenger and car ferries. Administratively part of Hesse, it is deluged by day-tripping coach tourists – three million a year – and for some its most famous feature, Drosselgasse, brings to mind the words 'tourist nightmare from hell'. If you're looking for a souvenir thimble, this is definitely the place to come. That said, the exuberance can be

fun, at least for a while, and the town is also a good place to begin a variety of delightful vineyard walks.

At Rüdeshheim's renowned **Weihnachtsmarkt** (Christmas Market), with its huge Nativity scene, you can stroll among 120 stalls from a dozen countries. It's held from late November to 23 December.

The **tourist office** (☎ 194 33; www.ruedesheim.de; Geisenheimer Strasse 22; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Mon-Fri & 11am-5pm Sat & Sun mid-Apr–1 Nov, 11am-5pm Mon-Fri 2 Nov–mid-Apr, also Sat & Sun late Nov-late Dec) is 600m east of Drosselgasse.

### Sights & Activities

The focus of most visits to Rüdeshheim is **Drosselgasse**, a tunnel-like alley so overloaded with signs that it looks like it might be in Hong Kong. This is the Rhine at its most colourfully touristic – bad German pop hits waft out from the pubs, which are filled with rollicking crowds. The **Oberstrasse**, at the top of Drosselgasse, is similarly overloaded with eateries and drinkeries, though to get away from the drunken madness all you have to do is wander a few blocks in any direction.

One island of relative calm, just 50m to the left from the top of Drosselgasse, is **Siegfried's Mechanisches Musikkabinett** (☎ 492 17; Oberstrasse 29; adult/child €5.50/3; ☎ 10am-6pm Mar-Dec), a fun collection of mechanical musical instruments, such as pianolas, from the 18th and 19th centuries. Many are demonstrated during the frequent guided tours (in English at 11am and 1pm; English text always available).

Near the Bingen car-ferry dock in the 800-year-old Brömserburg castle is the **Weinmuseum** (Wine Museum; ☎ 2348; Rheinstrasse 2; adult/student incl audio-guide €5/3; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Oct), where you'll find lots of wine paraphernalia from Roman times onwards. The tower affords great town and river views.

For an even better panorama, head up to the **Niederwald Denkmal** (1883), a bombastic monument on the wine slopes west of town starring **Germania** and celebrating the creation of the German Reich in 1871. You can walk up via the vineyards (trails are signposted) but it's faster to glide above the vineyards aboard the **Seilbahn** (cable car; ☎ 2402; Oberstrasse; adult/child €4.50/2, return €6.50/3; ☎ late Mar-Oct & late Nov-late Dec).

From the monument, a network of trails leads to destinations such as the romantic **Burg Ehrenfels** ruin and the **Jagdschloss** (hunting lodge). Down below, along the river, is

**Assmannshausen**, 5km downriver from Rüdeshheim, which is known for its red wines. From near the lodge you can catch a trail or the **Sesselbahn** (chairlift; adult/child incl the Seilbahn €6.50/3.50) down to Assmannshausen and then head back to Rüdeshheim either by train or passenger ferry (adult/child including the two lifts €10/5); the latter also goes to Bingen.

### AROUND RÜDESHEIM

#### Eibingen

About 2km north of Rüdeshheim, the wine village of Eibingen is the burial place of medieval power woman **Hildegard von Bingen** (see boxed text, p493). Her elaborate reliquary shrine, containing her heart, hair, tongue and skull, is prominently displayed inside the **parish church** (Marienthaler Strasse 3; ☎ daily). It attracts pilgrims from around the world, especially on 17 September, the day of her death, when a procession makes its way from Rüdeshheim. The church stands on a site once occupied by the second of the abbeys founded by Hildegard. Nearby, the new St Hildegard Convent, with around 60 nuns, dates back to 1904.

#### Kloster Eberbach

If you saw the 1986 film *The Name of the Rose*, starring Sean Connery, you've already seen much of this one-time Cistercian **monastery** (☎ 06723-917 80; www.kloster-eberbach.de; adult/student €3.50/1.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Oct, 11am-5pm Nov-Mar), where a number of scenes were shot. Dating from as far back as the 12th century and secularised in the early 1800s, this graceful complex went through periods as a lunatic asylum, a jail, a sheep pen and accommodation for WWII refugees. Visitors can explore the monks' refectory and dormitory as well as the austere Romanesque basilica.

Eberbach is about 20km northeast of (ie towards Wiesbaden from) Rüdeshheim. If you're not driving, the only way to get here is to take the train or bus to Eltville, followed by a one-hour signposted walk.

## THE MOSELLE VALLEY

While plenty of places in Germany demand that you hustle, the Moselle (in German, Mosel; *moze-l*) suggests that you should, well... just mosey. The German section of the river, which rises in France and then traverses Luxembourg, runs 195km from Trier to Koblenz on a

slow, serpentine course, revealing new scenery at every bend. Unlike the Romantic Rhine, it's spanned by plenty of bridges.

Exploring the vineyards and wineries of the Moselle Valley is an ideal way to get to know German culture, meet German people and, of course, acquire a taste for some wonderful wines. Slow down and experience sublime serial sipping.

Europe's steepest vineyards (the Bremmer Valmont, with a 72% grade) and Germany's most expensive vineyards (the Bernkasteler Doctor in Bernkastel-Kues) are both on the Moselle.

### Activities

#### CYCLING

With its gentle curves, the Moselle is great for exploration by bicycle – see p483 for information on long-distance bike paths along the Moselle and the Rhine. Tourist offices and bookshops can supply maps.

The **Mosel-Maare-Radweg** (www.maare-moselradweg.de, in German) links Lieser, on the Moselle's left bank and about 5km towards Trier from Bernkastel-Kues, with Daun in the Eifel. From mid-April or May to 1 November, you can take Regiolinie bus 300 up (per person €8, per bike €2, hourly) and ride the 55km back to Bernkastel-Kues.

On weekends and holidays from May to October and daily from mid-July to August and during two weeks in mid-October, it costs €2 to bring your bike on a limited number of **Moselbahn 'RadelBus' buses** (☎ 0651-96 800; www.moselbahn.de) plying the route between Trier, Bernkastel-Kues and Bullay.

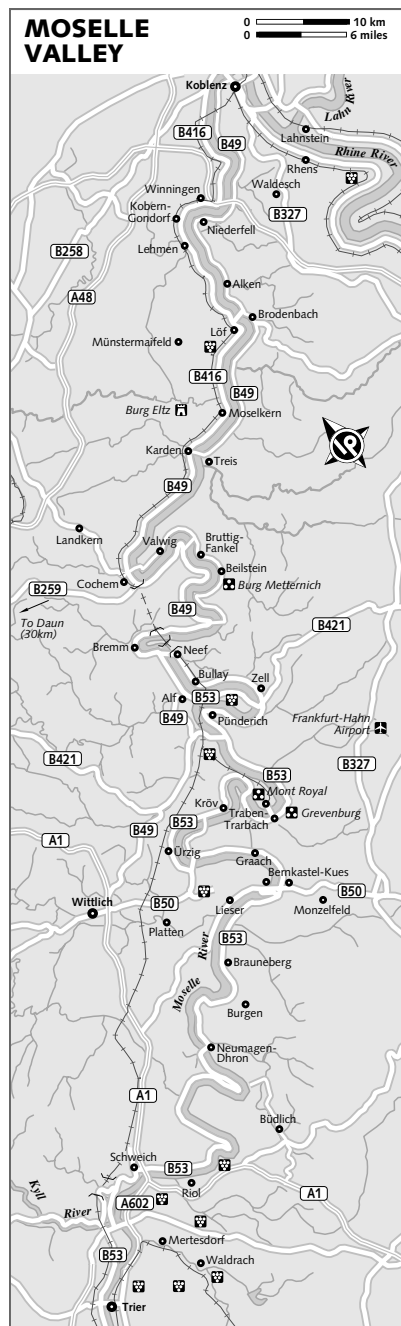
#### HIKING

The Moselle Valley is especially scenic walking country. Expect some steep climbs if you venture away from the river but the views are worth a few sore muscles. A popular long-distance hike is the **Moselhöhenweg**, running on both sides of the Moselle for a total of 390km. Good hiking maps are available at most good bookshops and tourist offices – the *Moselland-Wanderführer* (€6.60) is a comprehensive guide.

### Getting There & Away

The closest airport to this region is **Frankfurt-Hahn** (☎ 06543-509 200; www.hahn-airport.de), only 20km from Traben-Trarbach and 30km from Bernkastel-Kues.





Most people start their Moselle exploration either in Trier or in Koblenz. If you have private transport and are coming from the north, you might head up the Ahr Valley and cut through the Eifel Mountains. If you're coming from the Saarland, your route will take you through the Hunsrück Mountains.

## Getting Around

### BOAT

The river's winding course and a fair number of locks make water travel rather slow. In any case, passenger boats don't run frequently enough to make it practicable to hop from village to village.

From late April to early October, **Köln-Düsseldorfer** (KD; ☎ Mon-Fri 0221-20 88 318, daily 06742-2232; www.k-d.com) links Koblenz with Cochem (5¼ hours upriver, 4¼ hours downriver) with stops in seven villages (no cruises from Tuesday to Thursday until mid-June).

**Personen-Schiffahrt Gebrüder Kolb** (☎ 02673-1515; www.moselfahrplan.de in German) links Trier with Bernkastel-Kues (about 4½ hours each way) once a day, except Monday, from early May to October. The company also has a number of short-haul options that can be picked up in Bernkastel-Kues and Traben-Trarbach.

In many villages, local boat operators offer additional cruising options.

### BUS & TRAIN

The at-least-hourly rail line linking Koblenz with Trier (1½ to two hours) follows the river and serves its villages, but only as far up the Moselle as Bullay. From there, hourly Moselwein-Strecke shuttle trains head to Traben-Trarbach (€6, 25 minutes). **Moselbahn buses** (☎ 0651-96 800; www.moselbahn.de) serve all the river villages between Bullay and Trier (eight daily weekdays, five Saturday, three Sunday).

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Driving is the easiest way to see the Moselle. From Trier, the B53 and then, from Bullay, the B49 follow the river all the way to Koblenz, crossing it several times.

## TRIER

☎ 0651 / pop 100,000

A Unesco World Heritage Site since 1986, Trier is home to an outstanding assortment of Roman monuments as well as architectural gems from later ages. Its proximity to

both Luxembourg and France can be tasted in the cuisine and felt in the local esprit. About 18,000 students do their part to contribute to the lively atmosphere.

Trier was founded by the Romans as Augusta Treverorum in 15 BC, becoming capital of the Western Roman Empire by the 3rd century AD. A second heyday arrived in the 13th century, when its archbishops acquired the rank and power of prince-electors. In the following centuries, the city seasawed between periods of prosperity and poverty. Karl Marx (1818–83) lived here until age 17.

In 2007 the Luxembourg region, including Trier, will serve as a European Capital of Culture (www.luxembourg2007.org). Local events include a major **exhibition** (www.konstantin-ausstellung.de), held from June to November, on the Roman emperor Constantine the Great (AD 275–337) and his role in European history, to be held at the city's leading museums.

Trier is an excellent base for day trips along the Moselle River and to Luxembourg, where quite a few locals, attracted by higher pay, have found employment.

## Orientation

The Hauptbahnhof, in a rather seedy area, is about 600m southeast of the landmark Porta Nigra (Black Gate) and the adjacent tourist office. From there, the pedestrianised Simeonstrasse leads southwest to the Hauptmarkt. The Olewig (oh-leh-vig) Wine District is about 2km southeast of the centre.

## Information

**ATMs** Several are situated at Am Kornmarkt and in the Hauptbahnhof.

**ES-Telecom** (Bahnhofplatz 1; per hr €1; ☎ 9am–10pm) Internet access next to the Hauptbahnhof.

**Internet-Café** (Karl-Marx-Strasse 32; per hr €1; ☎ 10am–10pm Mon–Fri, 11am–9pm Sat & Sun)

**Mehrfachkarte** (adult/child/senior & student/family €6.20/1.50/3.10/14.80) A discount card good for the Porta Nigra, Kaiserthermen, Amphitheater and Barbarathermen. Sold at the tourist office.

**Post office** (Bahnhofplatz) Just north of the Hauptbahnhof.

**Tourist office** (☎ 978 080; www.trier.de; An der Porta Nigra; ☎ 9am–6pm Mon–Thu, to 7pm Fri & Sat, to 5pm Sun May–Oct, 9am or 10am–5pm or 6pm Mon–Sat, 10am–1pm or 3pm Sun Nov–Apr) Has a hotel vacancies board outside and sells Moselle-area walking maps.

**Trier-Card** (individual/family €9/15) For three consecutive days this card will get you 50% off museum and monument admissions, unlimited use of public transport

and various other discounts. It's only sold at the tourist office.

**Waschsalon** (Brückenstrasse 19–21; ☎ 8am–10pm) Self-service laundry.

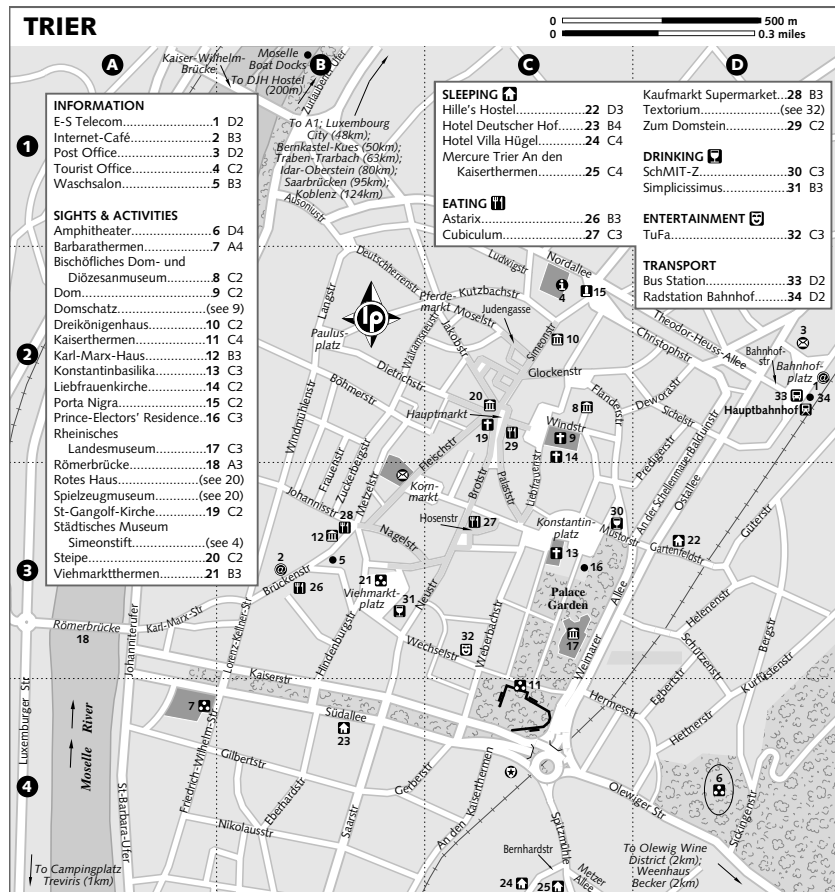
## Sights & Activities

Top billing among Trier's Roman monuments goes to the **Porta Nigra** (☎ 754 24; Porta-Nigra-Platz; adult/child to 18yr/senior & student/family €2.10/1.1.60/5.10; ☎ 9am–6pm Apr–Sep, to 5pm Mar & Oct, to 4pm Nov–Feb), a brooding 2nd-century city gate that's been blackened by time (hence the name, Latin for 'black gate'). A marvel of engineering and ingenuity, it's held together by nothing but gravity and iron rods. In the 11th century, Archbishop Poppo converted the structure into St Simeonkirche, a church named in honour of a Greek hermit who spent a stint holed up in its east tower.

The church spawned a monastery whose erstwhile home is now the **Städtisches Museum Simeonstift** (☎ 718 1459; An der Porta Nigra). Set to reopen in May 2007 after extensive renovations, it illustrates eight centuries of city history and also has collections of Coptic textiles and East Asian sculpture.

A block southwest is the 13th-century **Dreikönigenhaus** (Simeonstrasse 19; closed to public), a late Gothic residence with a geometrically painted façade. Originally, the entrance was up on the 1st floor, reachable by stairs that could be retracted in case of danger. Two blocks further on is the **Hauptmarkt**, where a farmers' market is still held daily except Sunday. Anchored by a festive fountain dedicated to St Peter and the Four Virtues, it's hemmed in by medieval and Renaissance architectural treasures such as the **Rotes Haus** (Red House) and the **Steipe**, a former banqueting hall that's now the home of the **Spiegelmuseum** (Toy Museum; ☎ 758 50; adult/youth 11–18yr/child €4/2/1.50; ☎ 11am–6pm Apr–Oct, 11am–5pm Tue–Sun Nov–Mar), a major draw for fans of miniature trains, mechanical toys, dolls and other childhood delights. The Gothic **St-Gangolf-Kirche** (☎ daily) is reached via a flowery portal.

A block east of Hauptmarkt looms the fortresslike **Dom** (☎ 6.30am–6pm Apr–Oct, 6.30am–5.30pm Nov–Mar), built above the palace of Constantine the Great's mother, Helena. The present structure is mostly Romanesque with some Gothic and baroque embellishments. To see some dazzling ecclesiastical equipment and peer into early Christian history, head upstairs to the **Domschatz** (cathedral treasury; adult/child



€1.50/0.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun & religious holidays, to 4pm Nov-Mar) or go straight to the **Bischöfliches Dom- und Diözesanmuseum** (☎ 710 5255; Windstrasse 6-8; adult/student €2/1; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sat, 1-5pm Sun & religious holidays, also open Mon Apr-Oct), just north of the Dom. The prized exhibit here is a 4th-century ceiling fresco from Helena's palace that was pieced together from countless fragments.

Just to the south is the **Liebfrauenkirche** (☎ 730am-6pm Apr-Oct, to 5.30pm Nov-Mar), one of Germany's earliest Gothic churches. The cruciform structure is supported by a dozen pillars symbolising the 12 apostles and, despite its strict symmetry, has a light, mystical quality.

Liebfrauenstrasse leads south to another architectural masterpiece, the brick-built **Konstantinbasilika** (Konstantinplatz; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat,

noon-6pm Sun & holidays Apr-Oct, 11am-noon & 3-4pm Tue-Sat, noon-1pm Sun & holidays Nov-Mar), built in AD 310 as Constantine's throne hall. Its dimensions (67m long and 36m high) are truly mind-blowing considering how long ago it was built. Later part of the residence of Trier's prince-electors, it is now a Protestant church.

The adjacent **prince-electors' residence**, a pink rococo confection, looks south over the lawns, pools and fountains of the formal **Palastgarten** (palace garden), in the middle of which stands the **Rheinisches Landesmuseum** (Roman Archaeological Museum; ☎ 977 40; Weimarer Allee 1; adult/child incl audio-guide €5.50/1.50; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-5pm Sat, Sun & holidays, closed Mon Nov-Apr). The rich collections provide an extraordinary look at local Roman life – highlights include a scale model of 4th-century Trier and rooms filled

with tombstones, mosaics, rare gold coins and some fantastic glass. Renovations of parts of the complex are set to be completed by June 2007.

From the museum, it's just a coin's toss south to the **Kaiserthermen** (☎ 442 62; Weimarer Allee 2; adult/child to 18yr/senior & student/family €2.10/1.60/5.10; ☎ 9am-6pm Apr-Sep, to 5pm Mar & Oct, to 4pm Nov-Feb), a vast thermal bathing complex created by Constantine. The striped brick-and-stone arches, once part of the Caldarium, may make you feel like you're at the Forum in Rome. You can get a sense of the layout from the lookout tower.

A 700m walk southeast is the Roman **Amphitheater** (☎ 730 10; Olewiger Strasse; adult/child to 18yr/senior & student/family €2.10/1.60/5.10; ☎ 9am-6pm Apr-Sep, to 5pm Mar & Oct, to 4pm Nov-Feb), once capable of holding 20,000 spectators during gladiator tournaments and animal fights. The dank cellars were once used to keep prisoners, caged animals and corpses.

For more Roman baths, head to the **Viehmarktthermen** (☎ 994 1057; Viehmarktplatz; adult/student €2.10/1.60/1; ☎ 9am-5pm, closed 1st work day of each week). Found by accident in the 1980s during the construction of a parking garage, the excavations are sheltered by a dramatic glass cube designed by the Cologne architect Oswald M Ungers.

Diehard thermal bath devotees still have the **Barbarathermen** (nr Südallee & Friedrich-Wilhelm-Strasse), closed for renovations until at least 2008. In the meantime you can look over the fence at the foundations, cellars and floor-heating system, all of which survived a 17th-century raid for stones to build a school.

Two blocks northwest is the **Römerbrücke**, successor to a 2nd-century bridge, five of whose original seven pylons are still extant.

The respectable bourgeois townhouse in which the author of *Das Kapital* was born and, quite comfortably, grew up is now the **Karl-Marx-Haus** (☎ 970 680; Brückenstrasse 10; adult/concession €3/1.50; ☎ 1-6pm Mon, 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar), whose exhibits take a look at the man and his oeuvre. Interestingly, early 19th-century Trier was no Dickensian industrial nightmare but rather a small town with just 10,000 residents.

## Tours

**City Walking Tour** (adult/child €6/3; ☎ 1.30pm Sat approx Apr-Oct) A two-hour tour in English that begins at the tourist office.

**Wine Tastings** (4/6/8 wines €4.50/6.50/8.50; ☎ 10am-6pm) Four local vintners take turns as hosts – contact the tourist office for a schedule.

## Sleeping

**Campingplatz Trevis** (☎ 820 0911; www.camping-trevis.de; Luxemburger Strasse 81; per adult/tent €6/4; ☎ campers year-round, tents late Mar-late Oct) On the Moselle's left bank 1.5km south of the Römerbrücke.

**Hille's Hostel** (☎ 710 2785, 0171-329 1247; www.hilles-hostel-trier.de; Gartenfeldstrasse 7; dm from €15, s/d €32/38; ☎ reception 8-11am & 4-6pm; ☎) An independent hostel with colourful artwork, a piano in the kitchen and spacious, brightly decorated rooms with private bathrooms.

**DJH hostel** (☎ 146 620; www.jugendherberge.de; An der Jugendherberge 4; dm €18; ☎ ☎) Spick-and-span, 242-bed hostel right on the Moselle, about 1km northeast of the tourist office. Rooms have bathrooms and up to six beds. Take bus 12 from the Hauptbahnhof.

**Weinhaus Becker** (☎ 938 080; www.weinhaus-becker.de in German; Olewiger Strasse 206; s/d from €50/80; ☎) About 2km east of the centre in the wine district of Olewig, this 18-room hotel pairs down-to-earth accommodation with a Michelin-starred restaurant (open for dinner Tuesday to Saturday, for lunch Wednesday to Sunday).

**Hotel Deutscher Hof** (☎ 977 80; www.hotel-deutscher-hof.de; Südallee 25; s €60-90, d €90-120, q €130; ☎ ☎) An international-standard business and tourist hotel whose 102 rooms come with sound-proof windows and pretty convincing fake orchids. Has a genuine nine-pin *Kegelebahn* (bowling alley; €6per hour) in the basement.

**Hotel Villa Hügel** (☎ 330 66; www.hotel-villa-huegel.de; Bernhardtstrasse 14; s €79-99, d €99-149; ☎ ☎) At this stylish hillside villa you can begin the day with a lavish champagne breakfast buffet and end it luxuriating in the 12m indoor pool and Finnish sauna. Views are great from the terrace and from many of the 30 rooms. Served by buses 2 and 82.

**Mercure Trier An den Kaiserthermen** (☎ 937 70; www.mercure.com; Metzger Allee 6; s €70-95, d €80-105; ☎ ☎ ☎) Modern, well-run business hotel with 105 rooms and weekend and seasonal specials. A bit out of the centre. Breakfast is €14.

## Eating & Drinking

Weinhaus Becker has an excellent restaurant.

**Cubiculum** (☎ 451 27; Hosenstrasse 2; light meals €2.50-6.50; ☎ 7pm-1am or 2am) This beer hall and restaurant, in a medieval cellar, serves light

meals such as casserole but the unique speciality here is *Pizzasalat* (€5.50) – you guessed it, a pizza topped with a pile of salad. Occasionally has live music on Friday or Saturday.

**Astarix** (☎ 722 39; Karl-Marx-Strasse 11; pizza from €5) Popular student hang-out with good pizza and casseroles (€4.20 plus €0.30 for each added ingredient). Extra-cheap on Monday. Enter through the arcade.

**Textorium** (☎ 474 82; Wechselstrasse 4-6; meals from €6) A very popular, industrial-chic restaurant with outdoor seating and daily specials. Located inside the TuFa cultural events venue.

**Zum Domstein** (☎ 744 90; Am Hauptmarkt 5; mains €9.50-18.50, Roman dinner €15-33) A German-style bistro where you can either feast like the ancient Romans or dine on more conventional German and international fare. A cookbook printed in Venice in 1498 is on display downstairs.

**Simplicissimus** (Viehmarktplatz 11; ☎ 10am-2am Mon-Sat, 2pm-2am Sun & holidays) An unpretentious café-bar with interesting old photos on the walls, rock on the PR system and waiters who've been known to get sloshed. Several other places to drink are right nearby.

**SchMIT-Z** (☎ 42 514; www.schmit-z.de in German; Mustorstrasse 4; ☎ 8pm-midnight Thu, 9pm-2am Sat, 4-8pm Sun) A mellow gay and lesbian information centre with a bar.

Picnic supplies are available at the **Kaufmarkt supermarket** (Brückenstrasse 2; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm Sat).

## Entertainment

Click 'events' on the tourist office website (www.trier.de) for details on concerts and other cultural activities.

**TuFa** (☎ 718 2412; Wechselstrasse 4-6) This vibrant cultural events venue, housed in a former *Tuchfabrik* (towel factory) – thus the name – hosts cabaret, live music of all sorts, theatre and dance performances. It is home to the Textorium (see above).

## Getting There & Away

Trier has several hourly train connections to Saarbrücken (€13.40, one to 1½ hours) and Koblenz (€17, 1½ to two hours). There are also frequent trains to Luxembourg (€8.40, 50 minutes), with onward connections to Paris. Regional buses to the Eifel and Hunsrück Mountains leave from the bus station outside the Hauptbahnhof.

## Getting Around

Trier has a comprehensive **bus system** (☎ 01801-993366; www.vrt-info.de, in German) but the city centre is easily explored on foot. Single tickets/day passes, sold by drivers, cost €1.55/4.25. The Olewig Wine District is served by buses 6, 16 and 26.

Bikes can be rented at **Radstation Bahnhof** (☎ 148 856; per day €7.50-10; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Oct, 10am-6pm Mon-Fri Nov-Mar), inside the Hauptbahnhof next to track 11.

## BERNKASTEL-KUES

☎ 06531 / pop 6900

This charming twin town, some 50km downriver from Trier, is the hub of the middle Moselle region. Bernkastel, on the right bank, is a symphony in half-timber, stone and slate and teems with wine taverns. Kues (pronounced *koos*), the birthplace of theologian Nicolas Cusanus (1401-64), has little fairy-tale flair but is home to the town's most important historical sights.

The **tourist office** (☎ 4023/24; www.bernkastel.de; Am Gestade 6, Bernkastel; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 1-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, 10am-1pm Sun & holidays May-Oct, to 3pm Fri & closed weekends & holidays Nov-Apr), 100m downriver from the bridge, sells hiking and cycling maps, offers internet access (per half-hour €0.50) and has an ATM. A hotel reservation board with a free telephone is just up Am Gestade (the road running along the river), near the bridge.

The bus station is next to the boat docks in Bernkastel.

## Sights & Activities

Bernkastel's pretty **Marktplatz**, a block inland from the bridge, is a romantic ensemble of half-timbered houses with beautifully decorated gables. Note the medieval iron rings, to which criminals were attached, on the façade of the old **Rathaus**.

On Karlsstrasse, the alley to the right as you face the Rathaus, the tiny **Spitzhäuschen** resembles a giant bird's house, its narrow base topped by a much larger, precariously leaning, upper floor. More such crooked gems line Römerstrasse and its side streets. Facing the bridge is the partly 14th-century **Pfarrkirche St Michael**, whose tower, ringed by a crown of turrets, was originally part of the town's fortifications.

A rewarding way to get your heart pumping is by hoofing it up to **Burg Landshut**, a ruined

13th-century castle – framed by vineyards and forests – on a bluff above town; allow 30 to 60 minutes. You'll be rewarded with glorious river valley views and a cold drink at the **café-beer-garden** (☎ 10am-6pm mid-Feb-mid-Dec). The less robust can catch a ride from Bernkastel's waterfront on the yellow **Burg Landshut-Express** (up/down/return €3.50/2.50/5; ☎ 10am-6pm on the hour approx Easter-Oct).

In Kues, most sights are conveniently grouped next to the bridge in the **St-Nikolaus-Hospital** (☎ 2260; Cusanustrasse 2; admission free; ☎ 9am-6pm Sun-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat), an old-age home, founded in 1458 by Cusanus, for 33 men (one for every year of Christ's life). You're free to explore the inner courtyard, Gothic chapel and cloister at leisure but the treasure-filled library can only be seen on a **guided tour** (€4; ☎ 10.30am Tue & 3pm Fri Apr-Oct), sometimes held in English.

The complex also houses the small **Mosel-Weinmuseum** (☎ 4141; adult/child under 12yr €2/1; ☎ 10am-5pm mid-Apr-Oct, 2-5pm Nov-mid-Apr) and the **Vinothek** (admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm mid-Apr-Oct, 2-5pm Nov-mid-Apr). Here, in the hospice's historic cellars, you can get thoroughly acquainted with Moselle wines during an 'all-you-can-drink' wine tasting (€9).

## Sleeping & Eating

In Bernkastel, places to eat can be found along the waterfront and in the Altstadt's narrow, pedestrians-only streets. In Kues there are several restaurants near the bridge.

**Campingplatz Kueser Werth** (☎ 8200; www.camping-kueser-werth.de; Am Hafen 2, Kues; site/person/car €4/4.50/11.50; ☎ Apr-Oct) About 2km upriver from the bridge, next to the yacht harbour.

**DJH hostel** (☎ 2395; www.jugendherberge.de; Jugendherbergstrasse 1, Bernkastel; dm €15; ☎) Fairly basic by today's standards. Scenically but inconveniently located above town next to Burg Landshut.

**Hotel-Restaurant Weinhaus St Maximilian** (☎ 965 00; www.hotel-sankt-maximilian.de in German; Saarallee 12, Kues; s €34-44, d €58-72; ☎) Run by a family of wine makers, this place has 12 quiet rooms, many with balconies, that look out on the courtyard of the restaurant, where you can dine on German and *moselländische* dishes (mains €8.50 to €14).

**Hotel Moselblümchen** (☎ 2335; www.hotel-moselbluemchen.de; Schwanenstrasse 10, Bernkastel; s €39-63, d €64-98; ☎) A traditional, family-run hotel on a narrow old-town alley behind the tourist

office. Has 20 tasteful rooms and a small sauna and can arrange bike rental. The restaurant's German and local specialities include sauerkraut and homemade wurst.

## Getting Around

Hire bikes at **Fun Bike Team** (☎ 940 24; Schanzstrasse 22, Bernkastel), 500m upriver from the bridge.

## TRABEN-TRARBACH

☎ 06541 / pop 6000

It's hard to imagine today that this peaceful twin town, 24km downriver from Bernkastel-Kues (but just 7km by foot over the hill), was once in the crosshairs of warring factions during the late-17th-century War of the Palatine Succession. Two ruined fortresses are all that survive from those tumultuous times, which were followed by a long period of prosperity as the town became a centre of wine making and trade.

Traben lost its medieval look to three major fires but was well compensated with beautiful *Jugendstil* (Art Nouveau) villas – and lots of wisteria. It joined with Trarbach in 1904.

## Orientation & Information

Traben, on the Moselle's left bank, is where you'll find the tourist office, the end-of-the-line train shelter (linked to Bullay), the adjacent bus station and the commercial centre. Trarbach is across the bridge on the right bank.

The **tourist office** (☎ 839 80; www.traben-trarbach.de in German; Am Bahnhof 5, Traben; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri Jul-Oct, to 5pm Apr-Jun & Nov, 10am-noon & 2-4pm Dec-Mar, also 11am-3pm Sat May-early Nov), in the Alter Bahnhof (old train station) 100m west along Bahnhofstrasse from the train shelter, sells the excellent *Mittelmosel Rad- und Wanderkarte* (€2.95), a map of area walking and cycling trails, and has two internet terminals (per hour €2). There are several ATMs in the immediate vicinity.

## Sights & Activities

The ruined medieval **Grevenburg**, which unlike its Cochem cousin survived the 19th century without being 'restored', sits high in the craggy hills above Trarbach and is reached from the Markt via a steep footpath. Because of its strategic importance, the castle changed hands 13 times, found itself under siege six times and was destroyed seven times. No wonder two walls are all that are left! Across

the river, the vast Vauban-style **Mont Royal** fortress, built in the late 1600s under Louis XIV as a base from which to project French power in the Rhineland, proved ruinously expensive and was soon dismantled by the French themselves.

Learn more about these castles and their historical significance at the **Mittelmosel-Museum** (☎ 9480; Casinostrasse 2, Trarbach; adult/youth €2.50/1; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct), housed in a furnished baroque villa proud of once having hosted Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

The new **Haus der Ikonen** (☎ 812408; Mittelstrasse 8, Trarbach; adult/11-17yr €2/0.50; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Easter-1 Nov, 10am-5pm Sat, Sun & holidays 2 Nov-Palm Sunday) displays modern Russian Orthodox icons and tries to promote intercultural dialogue. The adjacent, 14th-century **Stadtturm** (admission free; 🕒 daily), which can be climbed, has a 24-bell **glockenspiel** (carillon) that was installed in 2004 to commemorate the twin towns' centenary together.

Of Traben's sinuous **Art Nouveau villas**, the most seductive – and the only one open to the public – is the **Hotel Bellevue** (Am Moselufer), easily recognised by its champagne-bottle-shaped slate turret. The oak-panelled lobby and stained-glass windows in the restaurant typify the style, brought to town by Berlin architect Bruno Möhring. He also designed the 1898 **Brückentor**, above the bridge on the Trarbach side, now home to an excellent restaurant, **Brücken-Schenke**.

Traben-Trarbach is also a spa town, with hot mineral springs in Trarbach's southern district of Bad Wildstein. The **Moseltherme** (☎ 83030; www.moseltherme.de; Wildsteiner Weg; adult/child 6-15yr pool all-day €9/5, with sauna €11/7, cheaper for 1-3hr & Jun-Aug; 🕒 pool 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun, sauna 3-9pm Mon, 3-10pm Tue, 3pm-midnight Wed-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun) has saunas (women-only on Tuesday) and pools and also offers massages and beauty treatments.

The tourist office organises daily **wine tastings** (4/6/8 wines €4/6/8) and cellar tours with various vintners.

### Sleeping & Eating

Trarbach has quite a few restaurants in the area upriver from the bridge.

**DJH hostel** (☎ 9278; jh-traben-trarbach@djh-info.de; Hirtenpfad 6, Traben; dm €17; 🕒 ☑) All rooms at this modern, 172-bed hostel have private bathrooms. It's a 1.2km, signposted walk up from the train station, past the fire station.

**Central Hotel** (☎ 6238; www.central-hotel-traben.de; Bahnstrasse 43, Traben; s €30-35, d €56-66) In the same family for three generations, this 32-room hotel has modest rooms with compact bathrooms. The owner, Iris, lived in Texas for eight years but somehow returned twang-less.

**Hotel Bellevue** (☎ 7030; www.bellevue-hotel.de; Am Moselufer, Traben; s €80-110, d €125-180; 📞 📺 📺 📺) Classy, romantic and historic, this exquisite Art Nouveau hotel, facing the river, offers perks that include bike and canoe hire, pool and sauna. The stained-glass-adorned gourmet restaurant (mains €12.50 to €24.50) serves regional and Mediterranean-inspired cuisine.

**Weingut Caspari** (☎ 5778; Weiherstrasse 17-19, Trarbach; mains €7-12; 🕒 5pm-midnight Mon & Wed, 11.30am-midnight Thu-Sun Easter-Oct) Six short blocks inland from the bridge, this rustic, old-time **Strausswirtschaft** (a winery that serves its own products as well as hearty local cuisine) offers excellent value.

**Brücken-Schenke** (☎ 818435; in the Brückentor, Trarbach; meat mains €9.50-14.5, veg mains €6-12; 🕒 2-11pm Mon & Wed-Sat, 11am-10pm Sun; ☒) A range of solid, good-value German and regional favourites are served up inside the tower at the Trarbach end of the bridge. Great views.

There is an **Edeka Neukauf supermarket** (Am Bahnhof 44, Traben; 🕒 8am-8pm Mon-Sat) across the tracks from the train shelter.

### Getting There & Around

You can hire bikes at **Zweirad Wagner** (☎ 1649; Brückenstrasse 42, Trarbach; per day €7.50; 🕒 8am-12.30pm & 1.45-6pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-1pm Sat, also 10-11am Sun & holidays in summer), next to the Brückentor.

### COCHEM

☎ 02671 / pop 5200

Cochem, a picture-postcard village 40km downriver from Traben-Trarbach, spends much of the year overrun with day-trippers. If you're after narrow alleyways and half-timbered houses – well, there are less jaded locales to find them.

But Cochem does have a couple of unique sights. Towering above steep vineyards, the city-owned **Reichsburg** (☎ 255; www.reichsburg-cochem.de; adult/child 6-17yr €4.50/2.50; 🕒 9am-5pm mid-Mar–Nov) – everyone's idealised version of a turreted medieval castle – is actually a neo-Gothic pastiche built in 1877, making it a full 78 years older than Disneyland (the 11th-century original fell victim to frenzied French-

men in 1689). It can be seen on a 40-minute guided tour (ask for a sheet in English). The walk up from town takes about 15 minutes.

For great views of the town and river, you can catch the **Sesselbahn** (☎ 989063; Endertstrasse 44; 1-way/return €4/5.50; 🕒 9.30am-7.30pm mid-Jul–Aug, 10am-6pm Easter–mid-Jul & Sep–mid-Nov), which begins a few blocks west of the tourist office, up to the **Pinner Kreuz**. It's a pleasant walk back down through the vineyards.

From the train station, on the left bank at the downriver edge of town, it's only a short walk down Ravenstrasse to the **tourist office** (☎ 60040; www.cochem.de; Endertplatz 1; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, closed 1-2pm Nov-Mar, 9am-3pm Sat May–mid-Jul, to 5pm mid-Jul–Oct, 10am-noon Sun Jul-Oct).

Tucked away uphill from the Markt and its fountain, **Zom Stüffje** (☎ 7260; Oberbachstrasse 14; mains €7.50-16.50; 🕒 lunch & dinner, closed Tue) is richly decorated with dark timber and murals and serves classic German fare as well as four meat-free options.

### AROUND COCHEM

#### Beilstein

pop 170

On the right bank of the Moselle about 12km upriver from Cochem, Beilstein (www.beilstein-mosel.de, in German) is a pint-size village right out of the world of fairy tales. Little more than a cluster of houses surrounded by steep vineyards, its romantic, half-timbered townscape is enhanced by the ruined **Burg Metternich**, a hill-top castle reached via a staircase. During the Middle Ages, the **Zehnthauskeller** was used to store wine delivered as a tithe; it now houses a romantically dark, vaulted wine tavern.

### Burg Eltz

Victor Hugo thought this fairy-tale castle, hidden away in the forest above the left bank of the Moselle, was 'tall, terrific, strange and dark'. Indeed, **Burg Eltz** (☎ 02672-950500; www.burg-eltz.de; tour adult/student €6/4.50, treasury adult/child €2.50/1.50; 🕒 9.30am-5.30pm Apr-1 Nov), owned by the same family for almost 1000 years, has a compact and impenetrable exterior softened by scores of turrets crowning it like candles on a birthday cake. The **treasury** features a rich collection of jewellery, porcelain and weapons.

By car, you can reach Burg Eltz, which has never been destroyed, via the village of Münstermaifeld; the castle is 800m from

the car park (shuttle bus €1.50). Trains link Koblenz and Cochem with Moselkern, where a 35-minute trail to the castle begins at the Ringelsteiner Mühle car park.

## HUNSRÜCK MOUNTAINS

### IDAR-OBERSTEIN

☎ 06781 / pop 33,000

Agate mining in Idar-Oberstein goes back to at least 1454 but the industry really took off in the early 19th century after local adventurers left for South America (especially Brazil), where they harvested raw stones and sent them back home to be processed. The local mines have long since been exhausted, but Idar-Oberstein has remained a major gem-cutting and jewellery-manufacturing centre. If crystals really do have mysterious powers, you'd expect that a town with so many would look a lot better than this one does.

Scores of Idar-Oberstein shops have signs reading 'Schmuck' – whether you are one (in Yiddish and American English) or just looking for some (in German), following them is the best way to find jewellery, minerals and gemstones.

Along the **Nahe-Hunsrück-Mosel-Radweg**, it's a 75km bike ride to Bingen, on the Rhine.

### Orientation & Information

Idar-Oberstein is an unwieldy town, stretching for about 20km along a narrow, forested valley carved by the Nahe River. Hauptstrasse runs for about 6km (it's numbered from 1 up to about 500) but the interesting, pedestrianised bit – where you'll find the Marktplatz – is in Oberstein a few blocks northeast of the Bahnhof.

The **tourist office** (☎ 56390; www.idar-oberstein.de; Hauptstrasse 419, Oberstein; 🕒 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, Sun & holidays mid-Mar–Oct, 10am-5pm Mon-Fri Nov–mid-Mar) is near Oberstein's Marktplatz.

### Sights & Activities

**Museum Idar-Oberstein** (☎ 24619; Hauptstrasse 436, Oberstein; adult/child €3.60/2.10; 🕒 9am-5.30pm, to 7.30pm Jul, Aug & mid-Oct), 50m off the Marktplatz, has an impressive collection of minerals and crystals, including a model of Manhattan made of rock crystal.

Tucked in a niche in the rock face above the museum is the 15th-century **Felsenkirche** (Chapel in the Rocks; ☎ 22840; adult/child €2/0.50;

☞ 10am–6pm Apr–Oct), said to have been built by a local knight in atonement for the murder of his brother. It's a 216-step climb from the Marktplatz.

From the church it's a 20-minute uphill hike through a beech forest to the twin castles of **Burg Bosselstein**, a ruin dating from 1196, and **Schloss Oberstein**. At the top, you'll be rewarded with great views over the town, the Hunsrück Mountains and the Nahe Valley.

**Industriedenkmal Bengel** (☎ 27 030; Wilhelmstrasse 42a, Oberstein; adult/student €3/1.50; ☞ 10am–noon & 2–4pm Tue–Fri) is in the charmingly decrepit Jacob Bengel jewellery factory, built more than a century ago. It once serviced the Russian market (before the Revolution) and, later, made sleek Art Deco pieces. Now it's a jerry-rigged but engaging museum, where you can watch ancient machines click-clack as they transform spools of wire into chains. To get there from the tourist office, cross the pedestrian bridge at Hauptstrasse 466.

In a nature park west of Idar are the **Edelsteinminen Steinkaulenberg** (☎ 474 00; 30min tour adult/child €4/2.50; ☞ 9am–5pm mid–Mar–mid–Nov), the only visitable gemstone mine in Europe. You can dig for your own agate, amethyst, jasper and quartz in an **outdoor mining area** (adult/student €13/5; ☞ 3hr sessions at 9am & 1pm) but reservations are required and you must bring your own hammer, chisel and protective glasses (or purchase them). To get there, take bus 303 to Strassburgkaserne.

Cutters lying belly-down atop tilting benches demonstrate how gemstones used to be processed at the 17th-century **Historische Weiherschleife** (Historical Pond Mill; ☎ 901 918; Tiefensteiner Strasse 87, Tiefenstein; 40min tour adult/child €3/2; ☞ 10am–6pm mid–Mar–mid–Nov), the last of nearly 200 such water-powered gem-cutting mills that once stood along the Idarbach creek. It's situated northwest of Idar in Tiefenstein; take bus 1 to the Weiherschleife stop.

The **Deutsches Edelsteinmuseum** (☎ 900 980; www.edelsteinmuseum.de in German; Hauptstrasse 118, Idar; adult/child under 14yr €4.20/1.60; ☞ 9am–6pm, to 5pm Nov–Apr, closed Mon in Nov, Jan & Feb) should dazzle even the most, well, jaded of visitors. Highlights include a 12.555-carat topaz from Brazil. Take bus 301 or 302 to Börse.

### Sleeping & Eating

The local meat speciality, *Spießbraten*, consists of a hunk of beef or pork marinated in raw onion, salt and pepper and then grilled

over a beechwood fire, giving it a spicy, smoky taste. It's available at restaurants around Oberstein's Marktplatz.

**DJH hostel** (☎ 243 66; www.jugendherberge.de; Alte Treibe 23, Oberstein; dm €17; ☞ ☒) All the rooms in this modern, 128-bed hostel have a private bathroom. Situated on the hillside southeast of the Bahnhof.

**Edelstein-Hotel** (☎ 502 50; www.edelstein-hotel.de; Hauptstrasse 302, Oberstein; s/d/tr from €45/60/87; ☞ ☒) It's not terribly stylish, but the owners of this 18-room place are enthusiastic and helpful, and the 30°C pool and sauna area offer a perfect retreat on a rainy day. Situated about 600m towards Idar from Oberstein's pedestrian zone.

**Gästehaus Amethyst** (☎ 700 01; www.gaestehaus-amethyst.de; Hauptstrasse 324, Oberstein; s/d €49/66; ☞) This pocket-sized, bike-friendly *pension*, 200m from Oberstein's pedestrian zone, has delightful owners, nicely furnished rooms, a spanking-clean sauna and a fitness room (both free).

### Getting There & Around

Idar-Oberstein, about 80km east of Trier and about 90km northeast of Saarbrücken, is connected by train with Saarbrücken (€11.70, one hour) and Mainz (€10, one hour). The B41 and the B422 cross in Idar-Oberstein.

Local bus 301 regularly shuttles between Oberstein and Idar.

### KAISERSLAUTERN

☎ 0631 / pop 99,000

Better known as a perennial football contender (though its once-vaunted team was relegated in 2006) – and, more recently, as a World Cup host – than as a tourist magnet, Kaiserslautern does have a few worthwhile sights.

The city's Hauptbahnhof, on the southern edge of the commercial centre, was recently spruced up to welcome the 2006 World Cup hordes. About 1km to the north, on the northern edge of the downtown, is the spacious **tourist office** (365 2316; www.kaiserslautern.de; Fruchthallstrasse 14; ☞ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–4pm Sat), also a World Cup legacy.

Next door to the tourist office is the mid-19th-century **Fruchthalle** (market hall), which looks like it was beamed in from Florence (in fact, it was modelled on that city's Palazzo Medici) and is now used as a cultural events venue. Across the street are the ruins

of the 16th-century **Casimirbau**, built on the site of Emperor Barbarossa's 12th-century palace. The 19th-century, neo-Renaissance **Pfalzgalerie** (Palatinate Gallery of Art; ☞ 11am–8pm Tue, 10am–5pm Wed–Sun), whose focus is on paintings and sculptures, is a few blocks to the north.

About 1.5km northwest of the tourist office is the peaceful **Japanischer Garten** (Japanese Garden; www.japanischergarten.de, in German; Lauterstrasse 18; adult/child 12–17yr €3/1; ☞ 10am–7pm mid–Apr–early Oct, 11am–5pm early Oct–mid–Apr), opened in 2000. Approximately 1.5km further west is the **Gartenschau** (☎ 710 0700; Turnerstrasse 2; ☞ 9am or 10am–7pm Apr–Oct), a 22-hectare garden exhibition that springs to flowery life each year in the warm months.

Some 34,000 Americans live in and around Kaiserslautern (nicknamed 'K-Town'), forming the largest US military community outside the United States. The area's best-known installation is **Ramstein Air Base**, used by both NATO and the US Air Force. That's where the huge C-17 cargo planes you sometimes see over Kaiserslautern are heading, perhaps on a direct five-hour medical evacuation flight from Iraq.

The family-run **Hotel Pfälzer Hof** (☎ 362 400; www.pfaelzer-hof-kl.de, in German; Fruchthallstrasse 15; s/d €45/70; ☞), almost across the street from the tourist office, is a modest, old-time place with 18 rooms.

## SAARLAND

The tiny federal state of Saarland, long a land of coal and heavy industry, has in recent decades cleaned up its air and streams and reoriented its struggling economy towards hi-tech and tourism. The capital, Saarbrücken, is a vibrant city with good museums and an excellent culinary scene. Rolling hills and forest cover much of the countryside, which can be explored not only by car but also on foot or bicycle along sign-posted long-distance routes, including the 362km, circular **Saarland-Radweg**. In places such as the historic Völklinger Hütte ironworks, the region's industrial heritage is celebrated rather than downplayed.

Over the centuries, France and Germany have played Ping-Pong with the Saarland, coveting it for its valuable natural resources. In the 20th century, the region came under French control twice – after each of the world

wars – but in both cases (in referendums held in 1935 and 1955) its people voted in favour of rejoining Germany.

Although now solidly within German boundaries, the influence of the land of the baguette is still felt in all sorts of subtle ways. Many locals are bilingual and the standard greeting is not 'Hallo' but 'Salü', a variation of the French 'salut'. Their French heritage has softened the Saarlanders, who tend to be rather relaxed folk with an appreciation of good food, wine and company – *saarvoir vivre*, it's been called.

### SAARBRÜCKEN

☎ 0681 / pop 200,000

The Saarland capital, Saarbrücken, though a thoroughly modern city, is not without considerable charms. Vestiges of its 18th-century heyday as a royal residence under Prince Wilhelm Heinrich (1718–68) survive in the baroque townhouses and churches designed by his prolific and skilled court architect, Friedrich Joachim Stengel. The historic centre around St Johanner Markt brims with excellent restaurants and cafés, and there's a pleasant promenade for strolls along the Saar River.

### Orientation

Central Saarbrücken is bisected by the Saar River and the A620, an ugly autobahn that disfigures the river's left bank. From the Hauptbahnhof, at the northwestern end of the commercial centre, pedestrians-only Reichstrasse and Bahnhofstrasse lead 1km to St Johanner Markt, the city's nightlife hub.

### Information

Several ATMs can be found along Kaiserstrasse.

**Discount Waschsalon** (Blumenstrasse 42; ☞ 7am–11pm) Self-service laundry.

**Evangelisches Krankenhaus** (EvK; ☎ 38 860; Grossherzog Friedrich Strasse 44) A hospital whose main entrance is on Niekstrasse.

**Police station** (☎ 962 2233; Kärcherstrasse 5)

**Post office** (Hauptbahnhof; ☞ 8am–6.30pm Mon–Fri, 9am–1pm Sat)

**Reisebank** (Hauptbahnhof) Exchanges currency.

**Telecenter** (Dudweilerstrasse 26; per hr €1.50; ☞ 9am–midnight) Internet access.

**Telehouse** (per hr €1.50) Kaiserstrasse (☞ 9am–midnight); Obertorstrasse 1 (☞ 9am–midnight Mon–Sat, noon–midnight Sun) Internet access.

## TOURISM WITHOUT BORDERS

Astride the frontier between Germanic and Romantic Europe, the Saarland, neighbouring Luxembourg and the French *département* of Moselle (part of Lorraine) promote themselves to visitors as a single, culturally diverse area known as the **Grossregion** (Greater Region). The word *grenzenlos* (without borders, boundless) is often banded about and this will be especially true in 2007, when the whole region – sometimes referred to as **SaarLorLux** or **QuattroPole** ([www.quattropole.org](http://www.quattropole.org)) – plus Trier will serve as a **European Capital of Culture** ([www.luxembourg2007.org](http://www.luxembourg2007.org)).

It's remarkably easy to add an international flavour to your stay in the Saarland. From Saarbrücken's Hauptbahnhof, you can pop over to **Luxembourg** by bus (€13 return, 1¼ hours, four daily), rail it south to the French cathedral city of **Metz** (€13.30, 70 minutes, hourly) or hop on the S1 tram line to the French town of **Sarreguemines** (Saargemünd; €3.90), which has a delightful farmers market every Tuesday morning. Cyclists can take advantage of the 340km, trans-frontier **VeloRoute SaarLorLux**.

**Thalia Bücher** (☎ 388 30; Bahnhofstrasse 54) Bookshop.  
**Tourist office** (☎ 938 090; [www.die-region-saarbruecken.de](http://www.die-region-saarbruecken.de); Saar-Galerie, Reichsstrasse 1; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat) Facing the bus station outside the Hauptbahnhof. Sells tickets for cultural events.  
**Waschhaus** (Nauwieserstrasse 22; per wash €3; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Sat) Self-service laundry.

## Sights

### NORTHERN SAAR BANK

The heart of Saarbrücken (and its nightlife hub) is the historic **St Johanner Markt**, a long, narrow public square anchored by an ornate fountain designed by Stengel and flanked by some of the town's oldest buildings. The city's main commercial street, pedestrianised Bahnhofstrasse, heads northwest – as you cross Betzenstrasse, look to the northeast and you'll spot the cathedral-like **Rathaus**, a red-brick neo-Gothic structure.

At the southern end of St Johanner Markt is the **Stadtgalerie** (☎ 936 8321; [www.stadtgalerie.de](http://www.stadtgalerie.de) in German & French; St Johanner Markt 24; admission free; ☎ 11am-7pm Tue & Thu-Sun, noon-8pm Wed), which puts on temporary exhibitions of the latest in contemporary art, including video and performance art. Another example of Stengel's work awaits a block east and north on Türkenstrasse, in the form of the Catholic **Basilika St Johann**.

Heading south on Türkenstrasse will bring you to the massive yellow **Staatstheater** (☎ 30 920; [www.theater-saarbruecken.de](http://www.theater-saarbruecken.de) in German; Schillerplatz), a grandiose Nazi-era structure with neoclassical touches. It opened in 1938 with Richard Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman* and today presents opera, ballet, musicals and drama.

A short walk southeast is one of Saarbrücken's cultural highlights, the **Saarland Museum** (☎ 996 40; [www.saarlandmuseum.de](http://www.saarlandmuseum.de); Bismarckstrasse 11-19;

adult/student €1.50/1, more for special exhibitions; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue & Thu-Sun, 10am-10pm Wed). The **Moderne Galerie** tracks the development of European art over the course of the 20th century and is especially noteworthy for its German impressionists (eg Slevogt, Corinth and Liebermann) and expressionist works (eg by Kirchner, Marc and Jawlensky). The **Alte Sammlung** (Old Collection) across the street, goes back further in history with a millennium's worth of paintings, porcelain, tapestries and sculptures from southwest Germany and the Alsace and Lorraine regions of France.

### SOUTHERN SAAR BANK

Crossing the Saar River via the pedestrian-only Alte Brücke takes you over the autobahn and up to the Stengel-designed baroque **Schlossplatz**. The dominant building here is the **Saarbrücker Schloss**, which mixes elements of several architectural styles, from Renaissance to baroque to neoclassical; the modern glass tower was added in the 1980s and, alas, doesn't do for the Schloss what IM Pei's pyramid did for the Louvre. Its basement and a modern annex house the **Historisches Museum Saar** (☎ 506 4501; Schlossplatz 15; adult/concession €2.50/1.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue, Wed, Fri & Sun, 10am-8pm Thu, noon-6pm Sat), which has interesting exhibits about the region in the 20th century, with a focus on WWI, the Third Reich and the post-WWII years. Fans of the Romans, the Celts and their predecessors won't want to miss the **Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte** (Museum of Early History & Prehistory; ☎ 954 050; [www.historisches-museum.org](http://www.historisches-museum.org) in German; Schlossplatz 16; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun).

The late Gothic **Schlosskirche** (☎ 950 7638; Am Schlossberg 6; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue & Thu-Sun,

10am-10pm Wed) is now a museum whose focus is religious art from the 13th to 19th centuries; highlights include statuary from the 15th and 16th centuries and the elaborate tombs of three local, 17th- and 18th-century princes. The original stained-glass windows were destroyed in WWII and – as is obvious from the style – replaced in the late 1950s. Some of the panes had to be repaired after being blown out in 1999 by a bomb – presumably planted by extreme right-wing militants – aimed at a controversial historical exhibition on the role of *Wehrmacht* soldiers in WWII atrocities.

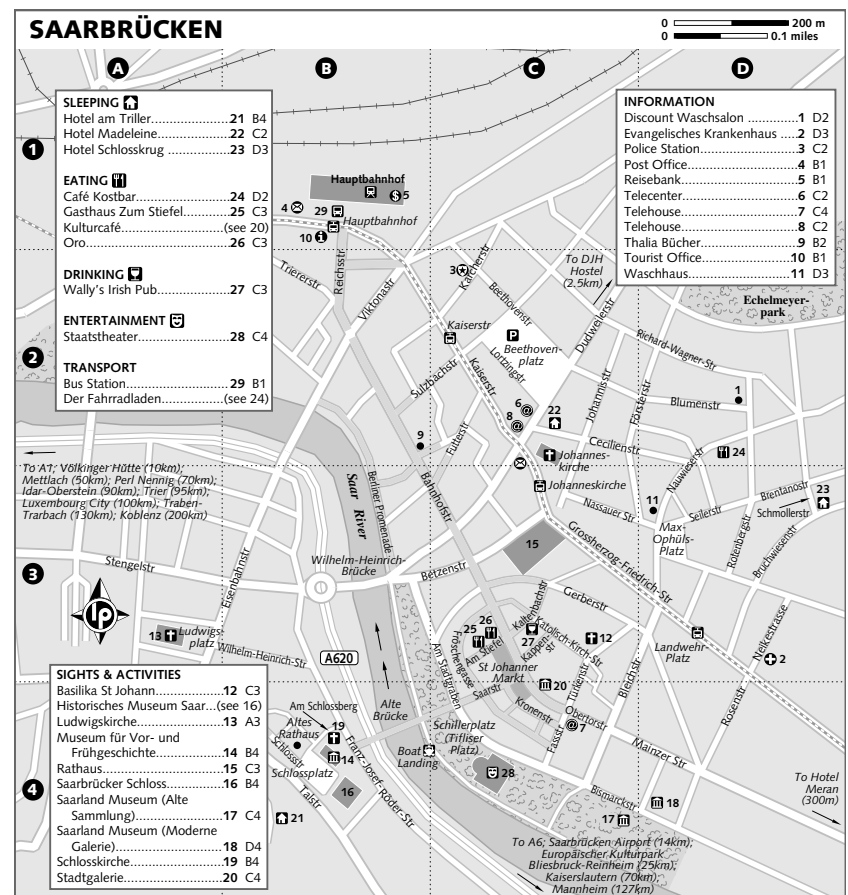
To the northwest is Stengel's handsome Ludwigsplatz, flanked by stately baroque townhouses. **Ludwigskirche** (☎ 10am-4.30pm Tue-

Sun), built in 1775, sports a façade festooned with Biblical figures and a brilliant white interior with stylish stucco decoration. If the church is closed, you can sneak a peek through the windows of the vestibule.

## Sleeping

**DJH hostel** (☎ 330 40; [www.jugendherberge.de](http://www.jugendherberge.de); Meerwiesertalweg 31; dm €18; ☎) Near the university northeast of the centre, on the Prinzenweiher lake in Saarbrücken's green belt. Served by bus 19 from the Rathaus and, Monday to Friday, by buses 49 and 69 from the Hauptbahnhof.

**Hotel Schlosskrug** (☎ 36 735; [www.hotel-schlosskrug.de](http://www.hotel-schlosskrug.de) in German; Schmollerstrasse 14; s/d €39/66) A rather ordinary hotel with some of the cheapest rooms in the city. Just a short walk from the centre.



**Hotel Madeleine** (☎ 322 28; www.hotel-madeleine.de; Cecilienstrasse 5; s €61-69, d €69-79; ☒ ☑) This central and friendly family-run hotel has 28 recently renovated rooms that are smallish but bright and comfortable.

**Hotel Meran** (☎ 653 81; www.hotel-meran.de in German; Mainzer Strasse 69; s €55-66, d €74-95; ☒ ☑) Despite its plain beige façade, this 43-room hotel, about 500m southeast of St Johanner Markt, has some nice touches, such as an 11m pool, sauna, and fireplace lounge. Rooms are fairly standard.

**Hotel am Triller** (☎ 580 000; Trillerweg 57; www.hotel-am-triller.de, in German; s/d from €108/146, Fri-Sun from €69/105; ☒ ☑ ☑ ☑) This 114-room, almost-boutique hotel, on a quiet street uphill from Schlossplatz, has airy and artsy public areas and a Franco-German restaurant.

## Eating & Drinking

Saarbrücken's lively restaurant and bar scene centres on St Johanner Markt and nearby streets such as Saarstrasse, Am Stiefel and Kapfenstrasse. Several pleasant cafés with outdoor seating can also be found at and around Schlossplatz. Local dishes revolve around the humble potato but are well worth trying – look for *Hoorische* (tasty potato dumplings sometimes stuffed with ground meats) and *Dibelabbes* (a potato casserole with dried meat and leeks). In the French tradition, meals are served with a basket of baguette slices.

**Café Kostbar** (☎ 93 86 366; Nauwieserstrasse 19; mains €6-10; ☒ ☑) 11am-1am, meals served noon-3pm & 6-11pm) In a neighbourhood with a counter-culture vibe, this small place that's in the courtyard and adored by impoverished but hungry students, serves a small selection of inexpensive but filling salads and mains.

**Kulturcafé** (☎ 379 9200; St Johanner Markt 24; light meals €6-8; ☒ ☑) 9.30am-1am) A café by day (meals are served until 6pm), this place attracts a youngish crowd after dark with its stylish minimalism-meets-gothic décor.

**Gasthaus Zum Stiefel** (☎ 936 450; Am Stiefel 2; mains €9-19) Saarbrücken's oldest microbrewery, in a building associated with the Bruch beer-brewing family for three centuries, features good-value classic German and local dishes alongside delicious home-spun creations such as *Bierhähnchen* (chicken in beer sauce). Next door is a rustic brew-pub, Stiefelbräu.

**Oro** (☒ ☑) 938 8663; St Johanner Markt 7-9; daily specials €6, mains €12.50-20; ☒ ☑) 10am-1am, to 3am Fri & Sat) A chic and very popular wine bar and restaurant with generous salads and a leafy courtyard.

**Wally's Irish Pub** (☎ 938 0587; Katolisch-Kirch-Strasse 1; ☒ ☑) noon-2am or later 365 days a year) A welcoming pub, popular with English-speakers, that's owned by an Irish fellow whose name is *not* Wally. Monday is quiz night (9pm) and there's whiskey tasting on Sunday (7pm).

## Getting There & Away

**Saarbrücken Airport** (☎ 06893-832 72; www.flughafen-saarbruecken.de), about 14km east of the city, offers mainly holiday charters and short hops within Germany, many operated by locally-based **Cirrus Airlines** (0180-444 4888; www.cirrus-airlines.de).

Saarbrücken's Hauptbahnhof has at least hourly rail connections to Trier (€13.40, one hour), Idar-Oberstein (€11.70, 50 minutes) and Mainz (€24.30, 1¼ hours). The city's main bus station is outside the Hauptbahnhof.

Saarbrücken is on the A6 from Kaiserslautern and Mannheim and the A1 from the Moselle Valley. The city is bisected by the A620, which goes north along the Saar River to Merzig.

## Getting Around

The Saarland has an extensive integrated **bus and rail network** (☎ 500 3377; www.saarbahn.de, www.vgs-online.de) that includes one tram line, optimistically named S1.

Tickets within the city (Zone 111) cost €2 (€1.60 for up to six stops); a day pass for one/five people costs €4.10/6.80. Bus R10 goes out to the airport (€2, 20 minutes, hourly Monday to Saturday).

You can book a taxi on ☎ 330 33.

Bicycles can be hired from **Der Fahrradladen** (☎ 370 98; per day €15, weekend €30; ☒ ☑) 2-7pm Mon, 10am-7pm Tue-Fri, 10am-2pm or 3pm Sat) in the courtyard at Nauwieserstrasse 19.

## VÖLKLINGER HÜTTE

The former ironworks of **Völklinger Hütte** (☎ 06898-910 0100; www.voelklinger-huette.org; adult/concession/family incl audio-guide €10/8.50/21; ☒ ☑) 10am-7pm May-Oct, 10am-6pm Nov-Apr), about 10km northwest of Saarbrücken on the banks of the Saar, is one of Europe's great industrial monuments. Opened in 1873, this vast foundry complex produced iron and steel until 1986. In recognition of its historical significance, it was declared a World Heritage Site by Unesco in 1994.

In recent years, the complex's towering blast furnaces and massive smelting facilities have taken on a new life as a cultural venue. Its halls regularly host intriguing art and photography exhibitions and in July and August,

the sweet sounds of jazz ring out every Friday night from 6pm to 7pm at Zimmerplatz. The Gebläsehalle (blowing hall), with its original red-and-white tiled floor, is also used for concerts. At night the compound is often lit up like a vast science-fiction set.

Trains link the town of Völklingen with Saarbrücken (€2.70, nine minutes, several times an hour) and Trier (€11.70, one hour, at least hourly); the ironworks are only a three-minute walk from the Bahnhof.

## METTLACH

☎ 06864 / pop 11,500

Mettlach, on the Saar River about 50km north-west of Saarbrücken, is at the heart of the prettiest section of the Saarland. For the last 200 years its history has been tied to the ceramics firm of Villeroy & Boch, which moved its factory and administrative headquarters into the **Alte Abtei**, a former Benedictine abbey, in 1809. Today, the abbey houses a predictably commercial, though not uninteresting, multimedia exhibit called **Keravision** (☎ 811 020; ☒ ☑) 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4pm Sat, Sun & holidays, closed Sun Nov-Mar), which introduces the company's history and products. Also here is the **Keramikmuseum** (☎ 811 294; ☒ ☑) 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4pm Sat, Sun & holidays, closed Sun Nov-Mar), with its collection of historical porcelain. Beside it, the millennium-old **Alter Turm** (Old Tower), burial place of the town's founder, Merovingian Duke Luitwin, is a refreshingly quirky piece of walk-in public art called **Living Planet Square**. As you walk through the installation – a giant bird topiary called the Earth Spirit which overlooks six giant-tile walls representing the continents in a rather, shall we say, explicit fashion – your movement activates jungle noises.

The **tourist office** (Saarschleife Touristik; ☎ 06864-8334; www.tourist-info.mettlach.de; Freiherr-vom-Stein-Strasse 64; ☒ ☑) 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri), has information about the town and region.

Frequent regional trains link Mettlach with Saarbrücken's Hauptbahnhof (€6.50, 40 minutes). By car, take the Merzig-Schwemlingen exit off the A8 and then follow the B51 north.

## AROUND METTLACH

The most scenic spot along the Saar River is the **Saarschleife**, where the river makes a spectacular hairpin loop. It's in the community of **Orscholz**, in a large nature park about 5km west of Mettlach. The best viewing point is **Cloef**, just a short walk through the forest from the village.

To experience the loop from the river, you can take a 1½-hour cruise from Mettlach offered by **Mettlacher-Personenschiffahrt** (☎ 06864-802 20; www.saar-schiffahrt.de, in German; adult/concession €7/3.50), with several daily departures from March to December.

## PERL-NENNIG

☎ 06866 / pop 6350

Perl-Nennig, on the Luxembourg border about 20km west of Mettlach and 40km south of Trier, is the Saarland's only wine-growing community; the local specialities are made with grape varieties from Burgundy, introduced after the war when the region was under French control. On weekends between April and October, wine growers open up their cellars for tastings on a rotating basis.

The main historical sight here is a stunning 160-sq-metre floor **mosaic** in the reconstructed 3rd-century **Römische Villa** (Roman villa; ☎ 1329; Römerstrasse 11; adult/child €1.50/0.75; ☒ ☑) 8.30am-noon & 1-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 9-11.30am & 1-4.30pm Tue-Sun Oct, Nov & Mar). Composed of three million tiny chips of coloured stone, it's the largest and best preserved such mosaic north of the Alps.

The **tourist office** (☎ 1439; www.nennig.de, in German; Bübinger Strasse 1a, Nennig; ☒ ☑) 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri), right by the Bahnhof in Nennig, can provide information on the villa, wine tastings and accommodation. It also hires out bicycles.

Perl-Nennig can be reached from Merzig by bus 6300. The train to/from Trier runs every hour or two (€6.20, 40 minutes). By car take the A8 from Saarbrücken or the B419 from Trier.

## EUROPÄISCHER KULTURPARK BLIESBRÜCK-REINHEIM

Flanking the Franco-German border about 25km southeast of Saarbrücken in the charming Blies Valley, the **Europäischer Kulturpark Bliesbrück-Reinheim** (European Archaeological Park; ☎ 06843-900 221; www.kulturpark-online.de, in German; www.archeo57.com, in French; Robert-Schuman-Strasse 2; adult/student €4.60/3.10; ☒ ☑) 10am-6pm Tue-Sun mid-Mar-Oct) showcases the ruins of a 1st- to 4th-century Gallo-Roman crafts town. Most of the artisans' houses, with their ovens, cellars and heating systems, as well as the thermal baths, are on the French side, but the area's most spectacular discovery, the **tomb of a Celtic princess** from AD 400, was discovered on the German side of the line. In 2007 the park will host an exhibit on life in Roman Europe.

From Saarbrücken, take bus R10 to Blieskastel (€4.60, one hour) and then bus K501.

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'