

Title:

Castles Along The Rhine

Word Count:

656

Summary:

The Rhine River is one of Germany's most popular tourist attractions. This famous river has been at the heart of German history for centuries, dating back to at least Roman times. In fact the river marked the eastern frontier of the Roman Empire.

Julius Caesar himself conquered the areas of Europe to the south and west of the Rhine, and the Germanic tribes retained control of the lands to the north of the river.

When the Roman Empire collapsed in about 400 AD the Germa...

Keywords:

Rhine, Germany, castles

Article Body:

The Rhine River is one of Germany's most popular tourist attractions. This famous river has been at the heart of German history for centuries, dating back to at least Roman times. In fact the river marked the eastern frontier of the Roman Empire.

Julius Caesar himself conquered the areas of Europe to the south and west of the Rhine, and the Germanic tribes retained control of the lands to the north of the river.

When the Roman Empire collapsed in about 400 AD the Germans flooded across the river and created a succession of states which would later become the Holy Roman Empire and eventually modern day Germany.

Picturesque feudal castles guard the gorge

The Rhine is hundreds of miles long, flowing north from Switzerland through Germany and the Netherlands to the North Sea, but it is the 35 mile stretch between Bingen and Koblenz that is the destination of thousands of tourists every year. Along this narrow section of the gorge there are more castles than

in any other river valley in the world.

Many of these castles are in ruins, but some have been restored as hotels and are open for tours. The castles stand like sentinels on the cliffs above both sides of the river creating the perfect environment for stunningly picturesque boat tours.

The castles are an unmistakable and unique feature of the mid-Rhine landscape. They were built by feudal overlords, to protect their lands from marauders who travelled up and down the river.

One of the most famous spots along this section of the river is the Lorelei Rock at St. Goarshausen. This is the deepest and narrowest points on the Rhine and is the inspiration for a famous German legend. As the story goes, a nymph lived in the Lorelei rock high above the Rhine. She is said to have lured fishermen to their destruction with her singing until she was overcome with love and plunged to her own death. A bronze statue of the nymph overlooks the river.

As you travel along the river, you see quaint, colorful villages that cater especially to tourists. The most popular are St. Goar and Bacharach, each with its own castle open for touring. And of course there are unlimited opportunities for sampling the German cuisine and exquisite Rhine wine.

In the heart of wine country

Most of Germany's vineyards are located in the Rhine valley. At Bingen, the Nahe river flows into the Rhine and along its banks are some of the most perfect south facing vineyards. North of Bingen the wine growing region is called the Mittelrhein. It is a magical place with vineyards growing among the fairy tale castles and snuggled into the overhanging rock face.

All of the German wine regions along the Rhine produce distinctive styles of wine, but in general Rhine wine is fuller and richer than Mosel wines. As in the Mosel, the primary grape is the Reisling, but there are other varieties of grapes too. The German wine research facility at Geisenheim has created many new hybrids such as Ehrenfelser, Scheurebe, and Kerner, offering visitors a wide variety of different tastes.

The best way to see this area

There are several ways to see this scenic area along the Rhine. Several river cruise companies offer tours along the most spectacular part of the gorge. It takes about two hours to cruise from St. Goar to Bacharach, and most visitors

agree this is the best way to get the maximum castle exposure.

But it's not the only way. There is also a train that runs between the villages in the area, and you can stop at numerous points along the way to sample the local culture. Tourists can also drive the highway along the banks of the river. Or the more adventurours can ride a bicycle along the many trails, and hop on a ferry at various points to cross over to the other side of the river.