



Saale-Unstrut



PRESS KIT

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Saale-Unstrut

Saale-Unstrut is a wine and cultural landscape in the heart of Germany characterised by medieval times. A unique architectural heritage from over 1,000 years of European history combined with unspoilt river landscapes and ancient vineyards make for an impressive destination. The region thus attracts discerning wine and culture enthusiasts, as well as active nature fans.

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Facts

Saale-Unstrut unique

- Europe's northernmost quality wine-growing region
- UNESCO World Heritage Site: the Nebra Sky Disc. It is the oldest concrete representation of cosmic phenomena. Site and visitor centre in Saale-Unstrut
- Naumburg Cathedral of St Peter: In July 2018, Naumburg Cathedral was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is one of the most important cultural monuments from the European High Middle Ages.
- Saale-Unstrut has a unique density of castles, palaces, cathedrals and monasteries.
- Wine: "Roter André" only grows in Saale-Unstrut.
- Naumburg cherry stollen: the oldest Christmas cake known as a "stollen"
- Würchwitz mite cheese: Würchwitzer Milbenkäse Manufaktur is the only company in Germany authorised to produce mite cheese.
- Germany's smallest tram operation in Naumburg
- Saxony-Anhalt's only pier on Geiseltalsee lake
- Porzellanwelt Leuchtenburg: modern porcelain exhibition with the world's largest porcelain vase, a porcelain church and a bridge of wishes
- Planetarium Jena: the oldest operating planetarium in the world
- Rieseneck hunting lodge and palace in Hummelshain: unique baroque hunting lodge in Germany with underground corridors and shooting galleries
- Brehm's world in Renthendorf: The naturalist was the first to recognise the sentient nature of animals

Top excursion destinations

- Naumburg Cathedral
- Rotkäppchen sparkling wine cellar
- Toskana Therme Spa, Bad Sulza
- Neuenburg Castle
- Memleben Monastery and Imperial Palace Museum
- Merseburg Cathedral
- Arche Nebra
- Heinrich-Schütz-Haus Weißenfels
- Querfurt Castle Museum
- Moritzburg Castle Park
- Leuchtenburg Castle
- Kochberg Castle
- Kristalltherme Bad Klosterlausnitz
- Dornburg Castles
- JenTower with viewing platform at a height of 128 metres

Culture

Traces of the High Middle Ages are omnipresent in Saale-Unstrut: Castles and palaces sit enthroned on rocks and hills of shell limestone and mottled sandstone. Medieval towns such as Naumburg and Freyburg, monasteries such as Schulpforta and Memleben, cathedrals such as the cathedrals of Naumburg, Merseburg and Zeitz bear witness to the past. World-class archaeological finds also show the region to be a cradle of prehistoric cultural history.

Middle Ages

Saale-Unstrut is home to a globally unique ensemble of magnificent medieval buildings. Imposing castles and palaces, impressive cathedrals, monasteries and churches are reminders of the period between the 11th and 13th centuries. The Romanesque Road in Saxony-Anhalt connects 88 of these historic buildings. This includes Naumburg Cathedral of St Peter, one of the most important sacred cultural monuments of the European High Middle Ages, which has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2018.

Querfurt Castle is one of the oldest and largest medieval castles in Germany, and has been the location for numerous national and international films. Merseburg Cathedral became world-famous thanks to the "Merseburg charms" discovered in the 19th century. The Memleben Monastery and Imperial Palace Museum, which was once a popular holiday destination for German emperors such as Otto the Great and Henry II, also gives an idea of how important the region was. The 800-year-old Leuchtenburg Castle in Seitenroda is particularly beautifully situated and, in addition to its impressive location, visitors are particularly impressed by its contrasting modern porcelain world.

Most important cultural monuments

- Naumburg Cathedral of St Peter
- Merseburg Cathedral
- Neuenburg Castle
- Querfurt Castle
- Rudelsburg Castle
- Saaleck Castle
- Pforta Monastery
- Memleben Monastery and Imperial Palace
- Merseburg Castle
- Moritzburg Castle and Zeitz Cathedral
- Burgscheidungen Castle
- Goseck Castle
- Neu-Augustusburg Castle
- Freyburg's St Mary's Church
- Eckartsburg Castle
- Romanesque House Bad Kösen
- Aegidien Chapel Naumburg
- Wettin Castle
- Petersberg Collegiate Church
- Landsberg Double Chapel
- Haynsburg Castle
- St Claren Monastery Weißenfels
- Neumarkt Church Merseburg
- Droyßig Castle
- Lützen Castle

- Schönburg Castle
- Zscheiplitz Monastery
- St Michael's Village Church in St Micheln
- Flemmingen Village Church
- St Margaret's Church in Steinbach
- Leuchtenburg Castle
- Historic town hall, city wall ensemble with Johannistor and "Pulverturm" (Powder Tower) in Jena
- Camburg Castle
- Dornburg Castles
- Ruins of the Cistercian nunnery and remains of the Stadroda town wall
- Kahla with its almost completely preserved medieval old town and fortifications
- Thalbürgel Monastery Church & Bad Klosterlausnitz
- Schkölen Moated Castle
- Bower Orlamünde
- Eisenberg Castle Church
- Hummelshain hunting residence & Rieseneck hunting estate
- Kochberg Castle
- "Fröhliche Wiederkunft" Moated Castle

Middle Ages for children

- At the KinderDomBauhütte Naumburg, children become stonemasons, glaziers or master builders. The projects provide an introduction to the world of 13th-century building huts.
- The KinderDomusMerseburg is the educational area of Merseburg Cathedral. Guided tours, holiday activities, children's birthday parties and educational museum projects are offered.
- At Neuenburg Castle, the youngest visitors have their own area: the "Kinderkemenate". Here they can transform themselves into kings, knights, jugglers and noblewomen and listen to the sagas and legends of the Neuenburg.
- At Memleben Monastery and Imperial Palace, children can live and work like the monks. Holiday activities expand the museum's educational programme.
- On the trail of the castle secrets of Leuchtenburg. During the summer holidays, children can discover mysterious places and then fortify themselves in the castle tavern.

Early music

- The Montalbâne Festival, which always takes place in mid-June, is a world-renowned festival of medieval and traditional music at Neuenburg Castle and in the Romanesque St Mary's Church in Freyburg/Unstrut.
- Burgheßler is home to the Gothic House, a centre for early music built in 1493. The events combine music, theatre and dance from the Middle Ages to the Baroque.

Residence cities

In 1656, the Saxon Elector Johann Georg I divided his land between his sons in his will. This is how the duchies of Saxe-Weißenfels, Saxe-Merseburg and Saxe-Zeitz came into being, whose majestic Baroque palaces still tell of their splendid past.

- **Merseburg**, one of the oldest towns in central Germany, looks back on an eventful history as a royal palace, bishop's residence and seat of government of the Prussian province of Saxony. The Gothic cathedral and the Renaissance castle are the venue for well-known events: the Merseburg Organ Festival in September and the Merseburg Castle Festival in June.
- **Weißenfels** is the gateway to the Saale-Unstrut region. Neu-Augustusburg Castle was an important cultural centre: George Frideric Handel and Johann Sebastian Bach played on the original organ in the castle church, which has been preserved to this day. The composer Heinrich Schütz also lived in Weißenfels, where he spent his childhood and the rest of his life.
- More than 1000 years of history have left their mark on **Zeitz**. The town on the Weiße Elster is famous for its baroque Moritzburg Castle with the adjoining castle park and Cathedral of St Peter. The Posa Monastery in Zeitz has a long tradition of wine-growing and is now part of the Weiße Elster wine trail.
- The small residential town of **Eisenberg** on the edge of the Thuringian Holzland is idyllic with its intact old town centre. A special jewel is hidden behind the castle façade. The baroque castle church (built 1679-1692) is one of the most beautiful church buildings in Thuringia with its lavish interior and original, historic Donath-Trost organ.

Archaeology

"Sky Trails"

The "Sky Trails" ("Himmelswege") tourist trail takes you into the world of archaeology and astronomy. Finds from recent excavations in Saxony-Anhalt can be seen at five locations, including the world-famous "Nebra Sky Disc".

- In the **Arche Nebra**, everything revolves around the archaeological find of the century, the "Nebra Sky Disc". The modern building, floating above the Unstrut valley like a golden sunship, is the visitor centre at the site. The bronze disc, which is over 3600 years old, was discovered by diggers on the nearby Mittelberg in 1999. The show in the planetarium explains the astronomical interpretation of the Sky Disc.
- The original of the Sky Disc is on display in the **State Museum of Prehistory in Halle**. It is also home to one of the oldest, most extensive and most important archaeological collections in Germany.
- The tomb of the dolmen goddess is a Neolithic megalithic tomb from **Langeneichstädt** and is around 5500 years old. It was uncovered during field work in 1987.
- The **Goseck Solar Observatory** is the oldest in the world. In 1991, aerial archaeologists discovered the 7,000-year-old circular moat, which was scientifically reconstructed in 2005.
- **Ringheiligtum Pömmelte** to the north of Saale-Unstrut is the most recent location of the "Sky Trails". The 4300-year-old circular moat complex was opened in 2016 as a tourist attraction with seven rings of palisades, ditches and ramparts. It is also known as the "German Stonehenge".

Battlefield archaeology

Saale-Unstrut was the scene of three major battles that went down in history: the Battle of Lützen, the Battle of Hassenhausen and the Battle of Großgörschen. Museums display battlefield artefacts and provide information on the background to the military operations. The Scharnhorst Festival commemorates the Battle of Großgörschen.

- The famous double battle of Jena and Auerstedt took place in **Hassenhausen**. On 14 October 1806, Napoleon's troops defeated the main Prussian army. 15,000 soldiers lost their lives. The museum displays eyewitness accounts, battlefield artefacts and a diorama with 600 figures.
- The museum is open to visitors at the site of the battle in **Jena** in 1806. The prehistory and course of the Battle of Jena and Auerstedt are explained in detail in the museum and on tours of the battlefields. The 1806 Museum houses historical exhibits, reports from contemporary witnesses, uniforms and weapons from the period, as well as extensive maps and images.
- 14 October 1806 – this date has left an impressive mark on the history of **Jena**. On this day, the famous Battle of Jena took place between the French army led by Napoleon I and the Prussian army, which ended victoriously for the French.
- The famous battle of the same name in the Thirty Years' War took place in **Lützen**. On 16 November 1632, there was a battle between the Swedish-Protestant and Imperial-Catholic troops. A mass grave discovered in 2011 caused an international sensation. It will be on display at the historic site in the near future.
- Every year in May you can experience history in **Großgörschen**. Historical societies re-enact the battle of 2 May 1813 at the Scharnhorst Festival. They want to honour the fallen, commemorate the suffering of the population and pay tribute to the life and work of Prussian General Gerhard David von Scharnhorst, who was wounded in battle.

Parks and gardens

A monastery garden with plants from the Middle Ages, baroque pleasure gardens and a late baroque spa complex are popular attractions for visitors to Saale-Unstrut. The lavishly designed gardens and parks invite you to take a stroll.

- Naumburg Cathedral Garden
- Gardens of the Dornburg Castles
- Historic Spa Facilities – Bad Lauchstädt
- Memleben Monastery Garden
- Merseburg Castle Gardens
- Burgscheidungen Castle Park
- Dieskau Castle Park
- Ostrau Castle Park
- Zeitz Castle Park
- Eisenberg Castle Park
- Dahlia Garden & Park – Bad Köstritz
- Jena Paradise
- Jena Botanical Garden
- Park of Kochberg Castle
- Park of the Hummelshain hunting residence
- Spa parks in Bad Dürrenberg, Bad Sulza, Bad Klosterlausnitz and Bad Kösen

Wine and pleasure

Picturesque landscapes with impressive vineyards, centuries-old dry stone walls, romantic vineyard cottages and protected river valleys guarantee an unforgettable stay in Europe's northernmost quality wine-growing region.

Saale-Unstrut wine region

As early as 998, Emperor Otto III. Vineyards to the Memleben monastery. The long winegrowing tradition can still be felt today. Vineyards with steep terraces, dry stone walls and vineyard cottages characterise the region. Today, over 50 grape varieties are grown in the approximately 768-hectare wine-growing region in Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia and Brandenburg.

Shell limestone and red sandstone soils, 1600 hours of sunshine and 500 millilitres of rainfall per year offer the grapes optimal growing conditions and produce delicate, fragrant, elegantly light wines. These include white and grey Burgundy, Silvaner, Riesling and Müller-Thurgau. But also rarities such as Chasselas and the "Roter André", which only grows in Saale-Unstrut.

Wine trails

The "Saale-Unstrut wine trail" runs for 60 kilometres from Memleben an der Unstrut along the Saale to Bad Sulza, past wine-growing villages, castles and fortresses. The 20-kilometre "Mansfeld Lakes wine trail" starts in Zappendorf and ends in Lutherstadt Eisleben. In the south-east of Saxony-Anhalt lies the "Weiße Elster" wine trail, which leads from Posa Monastery in Zeitz to Wetterzeube.

Wineries and wine taverns

Over 60 private wineries, the Freyburg winegrowers' association, the Kloster Pforta state winery and the Rotkäppchen sparkling wine cellar ensure the quality of Saale-Unstrut wines. In summer, wineries organise open wine cellar and vineyard days. In autumn, the cheerful winegrowers' festivals are celebrated. And when a bouquet hangs from the house, they invite visitors to stop off at the wine tavern.

Active recovery

Saale-Unstrut offers families and active people numerous attractive opportunities for eventful and relaxing holidays.

Cycling

Many cycle trails lead along the Saale and Unstrut rivers past imposing castles and cathedrals. The tours are well networked. Bike hire and e-bike charging stations are essential for the perfect cycling holiday.

- The **"Elster" cycle trail** leads from the source of the Weiße Elster near the Czech town of Aš to where it flows into the Saale near Halle. The first part of the cycle trail through the Vogtland is hilly, from Gera onwards the tour is also suitable for families. (250 km)
- The **Geiseltalsee circular trail** runs around the Geiseltalsee, Germany's largest artificial lake. (25 km)
- The **"Himmelscheiben" cycle trail** connects the site where the "Nebra Sky Disc" was found, the Mittelberg near Wangen, with its storage location, the State Museum of Prehistory in Halle. (71 km)
- The **"Ilmtal" cycle trail** starts at the source of the Ilm near Stützerbach in the Thuringian Forest and runs through Ilmenau, Weimar and Bad Sulza until it flows into the Saale near Großheringen. (120 km)
- The **"Saale" cycle trail** begins in Zell in the Fichtelgebirge, winds along the Saale through Thuringia and Saxony-Anhalt and ends in Barby on the Elbe. We recommend the 130 kilometre section between Jena via Naumburg, Weißenfels and Merseburg to Wettin. (409 km)
- The **Saale-Unstrut-Elster-Rad-Acht** in the south of Saxony-Anhalt connects various cycle trails to form an intersecting circular trail. The cycle trails run in two trails from Naumburg. (east trail: 86 km, west trail: 78 km)
- The **"Unstrut" cycle trail** runs through the states of Thuringia and Saxony-Anhalt. It accompanies the river from its source in Eichsfeld to where it flows into the Saale at Blütengrund near Naumburg. (186 km)
- The **"Thüringer Städteketten" long-distance cycle trail** connects seven of Thuringia's most beautiful towns: Altenburg, Gera, Jena, Weimar, Erfurt, Gotha, Eisenach. It leads through scenic areas and is particularly suitable for those interested in culture and touring cyclists. (225 km)

Other lesser-known cycle trails lead to interesting destinations in Saale-Unstrut.

- "Zuckerbahn" cycle trail (37 km)
- "Recarbo-Kohle" cycle trail (19 km)
- "Sole-Kohle-Geschichte" cycle trail (28 km)
- "Dolmen" cycle trail (52 km)
- "Thüringer Mühlen" cycle trail (18 km)
- "Hasselbach" cycle trail (22 km)
- "Rippach" cycle trail (45 km)
- "Goethe" cycle trail (90 km)
- Salt Road cycle trail (136 km)
- "Kirchenradweg Jena-Thalbürgel" cycle trail (13.5 km)
- "Thüringer Mühlen" cycle trail (approx. 75 km)
- "Energie" cycle trail (38 km)
- "Orla" cycle trail (35 km)

Hiking

Saale-Unstrut offers a well-developed network of hiking trails with a total of 1300 kilometres. From long-distance hiking trails to family-friendly trails, there is something for everyone.

- The **"Bad Sulza" wine trail** starts at the "Thuringian Weintor", the beginning of the Saale-Unstrut wine trail, and runs through and around the spa and wine town of Bad Sulza. (8 km)
- The **Feengrotten-Kyffhäuser-Weg** is a long-distance hiking trail through central Germany from Saalfeld to Bad Frankenhausen. In Saale-Unstrut, it largely follows the "Saale" cycle trail. (230 km)
- **Finne hiking trail**. The Finne is the eastern foothills of the Harz, which runs through Saale-Unstrut as a mountain range. A section of the Finne hiking trail leads from Weißenfels via Bad Sulza to Rastenberg. (60 km)
- The **Geopfad Bad Kösen**, also known as the **"Himmelreichweg"**, is a circular hiking trail from Bad Kösen via Rudelsburg Castle, Saaleck Castle to the Himmelreich restaurant and back to Bad Kösen. (10 km)
- Nine wind and water mills in the Wethautal can be seen on the **"Mühlenwanderweg"** trail. It begins and ends in Naumburg. (20 km)
- The 450-kilometre-long **"Ökumenische Pilgerweg" trail** follows the course of the medieval Via Regia trade trail and stretches from Görlitz to Vacha. The trail through Saale-Unstrut runs from Horburg via Merseburg and Naumburg to Eckartsberga. (60 km)
- The **Saale wine trail** leads along the vineyards and wineries from Naumburg via Kleinjena and Bad Kösen back to Naumburg. (25 km)
- The **Unstrut wine trail** begins and ends in Saale-Unstrut's wine capital Freyburg. The historic Rotkäppchen sparkling wine cellars and the Zeddenbacher Mühle mill are located along the way. (8 km)
- The **"Weinlehrpfad" wine trail** runs along the "Unstrut" cycle trail, between Laucha and Freyburg, through the Saale-Unstrut wine-growing region. 26 display boards provide interesting facts about wine. Again and again, there are views of the most beautiful vineyards.
- **SaaleHorizontale**: The "SaaleHorizontale" runs along narrow trails through steep shell limestone slopes and offers spectacular views of the unmistakable landscape of the Middle Saale Valley around the city of Jena. (91 km)
- **Zeitgrundweg**: The very original trail connects Hermsdorf with Stadtroda. The "Zeitgrund" nature reserve is home to many rare mosses, ferns and unspoilt mixed forests, Douglas firs and beeches. (11 km)
- The **Novalisweg** connects the Romantikerhaus Jena with the village of Schlöben. Along the way, 17 sculptures refer to the work of the writer Novalis and the early Romantic period. (15 km)
- **"Lutherweg"**: Numerous towns and villages bear witness to Martin Luther and the time of the Reformation. The sections through Saale-Unstrut are Kahla to Jena (16 km), Landsberg via Petersberg and Halle to Hohnstedt (40 km) and Hohnstedt to Rothenburg (Wettin-Löbejün) (20 km)

Water activities

- **Shipping**: Saales shipping runs between Bad Kösen and Rudelsburg. Tours are also offered from Merseburg to Halle, Schkopau and Leuna. The passenger ships MS Geiseltalsee and Felix offer round trips on the Geiseltalsee.
- **Sailing courses** and trips are offered on the Geiseltalsee. The barbecue and houseboats offer a cosy alternative. There is even a sauna boat.
- The region is best explored on the water. Various providers offer **inflatable boat trips, canoe and kayak tours** on the Saale and Unstrut rivers.

Experience the nature park

- Covering an area of around 104,000 hectares, the **Saale-Unstrut-Triasland Geo-Nature Park** extends across areas of the Burgenland district, the Saale district and municipalities in Thuringia. The nature park with its steep vineyards, orchards, dry grassland and forests can be discovered on well-developed cycle and hiking trails.
- The **"Naturpark Unteres Saaleetal"** nature park stretches from Halle to Nienburg and covers an area of 40,800 hectares. Especially from Halle to Bernburg, the course of the river with its floodplain landscapes and the variously shaped side valleys and rocky slopes is an ideal destination for tourist excursions.

Nature experience region

- The **Natura Jenensis** nature experience region is currently being created in Jena to get people even more enthusiastic about nature, show the interplay between nature and people and provide information about hiking trails in the area. The Natura Jenensis is linked by the SaaleHorizontale quality hiking trail.

Air sports

- You can get a different perspective of Saale-Unstrut from the air. Various organisers in Zeitz and Naumburg and at the **Laucha, Sprossen and Merseburg airfields** offer rides in motorised aircraft, hot-air balloons, para-trikes, gliders, paragliders and parachutes.
- Jena and the Thuringian Saaleland can be experienced on a glider flight from the **Jena-Schöngleina airfield**, sightseeing flights over the region are possible from **Gera** in a motorised aircraft and there are also wonderful views from a hot air balloon

Health and well-being

The spa triangle of Bad Sulza, Bad Kösen and Bad Bibra, as well as the towns of Bad Dürrenberg and Bad Klosterlausnitz, are appreciated for their well-kept spa facilities, modern rehabilitation clinics, extensive wellness offers and picturesque landscapes. Not only spa guests, but also holidaymakers are regularly drawn to the resorts for active recreation. Spas, thermal baths and health clinics utilise the healing effects of salt and brine and, together with the wine and cultural landscape, form a holistic pampering programme.

Bad Kösen

The graduation tower on a hill above the Saale is a symbol of Bad Kösen's almost 400-year salt history. The salt-enriched air around the complex has a particularly beneficial effect on walks through the neighbouring spa gardens. At the beginning of 2016, the Kösalina spa centre opened in Bad Kösen with a brine spa, salt grotto, sauna area and brine steam bath.

Bad Sulza

Brine and salt also characterised the history of Bad Sulza. Brine was once boiled to make table salt, later it was used to promote health. The Louise graduation tower with its unique nebuliser hall is particularly popular with people with skin and respiratory diseases. Today, Bad Sulza is a state-recognised brine spa and the most traditional health resort in Thuringia. The "Toskana Therme Spa" in the town is home to a varied sauna, bathing and wellness area. The highlight is the Liquid Sound Temple. Here, body-warm thermal brine water from a healing spring ensures weightless relaxation.

Bad Bibra

The third spa in the Saale-Unstrut spa triangle is Bad Bibra. The Dukes of Saxony-Weißenfels already valued the town for its iron-rich spring water, the health-promoting effects of which were scientifically confirmed as early as 1684. The nobles were far-sighted in their commitment to expanding the spa and bathing facilities at Bad Bibra. The former fashionable spa of the Dukes of Saxony-Weißenfels now invites visitors to enjoy the world-famous water therapy with its Kneipp facilities at the bathing area and in Bärenpark.

Bad Dürrenberg

In Bad Dürrenberg, the imposing graduation tower, which is almost 700 metres long, attracts attention. It is the longest continuous one in Europe and can be seen from afar. Bad Dürrenberg was once an important centre of salt production in Electoral Saxony. The museum in the Borlachturm provides information about this part of the city's history. The spa gardens, which merge into the extensive, natural Saale floodplain, are also worth a visit. The city is currently preparing for the 2024 State Garden Show under the motto "Salzkristall & Blütenzauber".

Bad Klosterlausnitz

The state-recognised spa town of Bad Klosterlausnitz is surrounded by hills, forests and meadows. The modern rehabilitation clinics and the outpatient spa centre offer healing and relaxation treatments, supported by the local medicinal drinking water. Highlights include the Kristall-Therme spa with saltwater pool and large sauna area, as well as the picturesque spa gardens.

Tourism

Profile

Saale-Unstrut is still a young travel destination in Germany. The region has only been marketed as a tourist destination as a whole since the early 1990s.

Saale-Unstrut is a comparatively new travel destination in Germany. The region has only been marketed as a tourist destination as a whole since the early 1990s. In 2023, the newly founded Saale-Unstrut Tourismus GmbH, which was formed from the existing tourism associations Saale-Unstrut-Tourismus e.V. (Saale-Unstrut) and Thuringian Tourism Association Jena-Saale-Holzland e.V. (Saaleland), took over this work. The shareholders are Saale-Unstrut-Tourismus e.V. (70 %), the Thuringian Tourism Association Saale-Holzland e.V. (15 %) and the city of Jena (15 %). One of its tasks is to market the tourist offers across the federal states and together as the Saale-Unstrut destination.

- 239 commercial operations
- 2.4 million overnight stays per year (2022) in accommodation establishments with more than 10 beds
- 990,415 overnight guests per year (2022)
- Size of the region: 5,000 km²

Tourism development

Tourism development of the region with the districts of Burgenlandkreis, Saalekreis, Jena, Saale-Holzlandkreis and the town of Bad Sulza from 2002-2021

Development of overnight stays in the period 2002 - 2021

	2002	2006	2017	2018	2019	2020*	2021*
Burgenland district	502,000	515,000	696,569	727,353	751,608	579,597	547,446
Saale district	253,000	275,000	471,608	422,542	447,039	297,823	318,368
Saale-Holzland district	332,446	367,520	378,218	349,616	372,080	262,576	257,289
Jena	276,750	324,222	337,004	334,627	370,495	195,962	227,133
Bad Sulza	165,000	204,000	234,537	234,515	212,876	128,528	142,625
Uhlstädt-Kirchhasel	14,242	25,281	35,108	35,952	38,102	33,042	23,376
SU Region	1,543,438	1,711,023	2,153,044	2,150,784	2,240,920	1,544,019	1,539,613

Development of overnight guests in the period 2002 - 2021

	2002	2006	2017	2018	2019	2020*	2021*
Burgenland district	161,000	185,000	248,488	260,715	237,608	189,072	174,693
Saale district	133,500	169,000	230,068	223,790	230,309	126,918	134,644
Saale-Holzland district	76,382	94,751	103,364	99,598	103,892	59,477	56,108
Jena	140,488	148,678	196,236	198,505	217,039	109,388	118,178
Bad Sulza	31,200	43,000	59,056	55,393	48,667	24,936	23,777
Uhlstädt-Kirchhasel	4,302	5,844	9,520	9,661	10,701	9,613	7,529
SU Region	546,872	646,273	846,732	861 238	863,190	534,503	514,992

*Decline in numbers due to corona-related restrictions in accommodation establishments and tourist facilities

Basic texts

Handmade Saale.Unstrut

Farmers, florists, winegrowers, carpenters and potters joined forces in July 2019 to form the regional network "handgemacht Saale.Unstrut". The speciality: They pass on their passion for their profession and their craft to guests in hands-on programmes.

"handgemacht Saale.Unstrut" stands for workmanship, care and passion for the product, as well as for solidarity with the Saale-Unstrut region. This gives products from traditional crafts, agriculture and the manufacturing industry, as well as the creative industries greater attention and added value. There are currently 30 handmakers, and the network is constantly expanding. The project is coordinated by the local Saale-Unstrut-Tourismus e.V. tourism association.

Experience offers online and bookable

At "handmade Saale.Unstrut", regional products are combined with experience offers to make regionality tangible – because nothing is better than handmade and then also homemade. Since the end of 2020, the first experience offers have been available via the network page www.handgemacht-saale-unstrut.de and can be booked directly. Depending on the pandemic-related restrictions, the bookable offers will be gradually expanded.

At the same time, lively social media coverage generates further attention. On the "handmade" channels, the so-called craftspeople are presented in the form of videos, photos, interviews and recipe and do-it-yourself ideas. There are even live events via Instagram.

Experience the Middle Ages in Saale-Unstrut

In Saale-Unstrut, the Middle Ages are anything but over. The region's unique cultural heritage bears witness to an eventful past and can be experienced in exhibitions, events and medieval festivals.

The High Middle Ages is one of the most fascinating periods in European cultural history. Life shifted to up-and-coming towns, trade and crafts boomed and defiant castles, magnificent cathedrals, monasteries and churches were built in many places. It is the heyday of Romanesque architecture. In Saale-Unstrut in the heart of Germany, a globally unique ensemble of magnificent medieval buildings can still be admired today – and the era in which they were built can be experienced in a variety of ways.

World-class masterpiece

One of the most important sacred cultural monuments of the European High Middle Ages is Naumburg Cathedral of St Peter, a World Heritage Site since July 2018. Its impressive cathedral treasury vault is one of the largest Romanesque vaults in central Germany. The cathedral gained worldwide fame through the figure of Uta, the founder of the cathedral, whose facial features as the "most beautiful woman of the Middle Ages" characterised the image of the medieval noblewoman like no other. The oldest stone sculpture of St Elizabeth of Thuringia, which dates back to around 1235, and the 16th century altar wings created by Lucas Cranach are also unique.

True gems of the "Romanesque period"

The "Romanesque Road" leads past Naumburg Cathedral. "Ferienstraße" unites almost the entire cultural heritage of the High Middle Ages in Saale-Unstrut. It is home to such imposing buildings as Querfurt Castle, one of the largest medieval castles in Germany, and Eckartsburg Castle, which served to protect the Via Regia, which also passed through here. The Memleben Monastery and Imperial Palace, which was once a popular holiday destination for German emperors such as Otto the Great and Henry II, still gives an idea of how important the area once was with the ruins of the monastery church, the monastery garden and the late Romanesque crypt.

Heritage of the monks

Memleben Monastery has another important significance for the region. In 998, Emperor Otto III donated vineyards to the monks of Memleben, thus laying the foundations for viticulture on the Saale and Unstrut rivers. Viticulture really blossomed 140 years later with the founding of the Pforta Monastery near Naumburg. The still young Cistercian order cultivated the vineyards intensively and thus had a considerable influence on the local winegrowing tradition. Today, the terroir produces quality wines and is highly prized by connoisseurs for its rarities.

Sounds of the Middle Ages

Fans of medieval sounds are drawn to Neuenburg Castle every year. 1,000 years ago, it was a stately place of representation for the Thuringian landgraves and the centre of medieval courtly culture. Together with Freyburg's St Mary's Church, it is now the impressive venue for Europe's most important festival of medieval music: Montalbâne. For 30 years, vocal and instrumental ensembles from various nations have transported euphoric audiences into another time and world for three days every summer.

Saale-Unstrut culinary

Saale-Unstrut is a land of connoisseurs. Old vineyards with rustic dry stone walls and romantic vineyard cottages characterise the landscape. And a remarkable regional cuisine has developed around the thousand-year-old winegrowing tradition.

Saale-Unstrut wine: 1000 years of tradition

the Saale-Unstrut quality wine-growing region, which is now shared by three federal states, covers 768 hectares. The history of viticulture goes back to the Middle Ages, to the Ottonian Empire. Connoisseurs appreciate the wines produced on this latitude as they are known for their unmistakable profile with a delicate, fruity and tangy bouquet and delicate mineral nuances of the shell limestone and coloured sandstone soils. 50 different grape varieties are cultivated, mainly light-coloured ones such as Müller-Thurgau, Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris, Bacchus and Riesling. Rarities include Gutedel, Solaris and the "Roter André", which only grows in Saale-Unstrut.

Along the Saale-Unstrut wine trail, landscape and wine culture create an invigorating blend. Hiking, cycling and water trails lead from vineyard to vineyard. In addition to the Freyburg Winegrowers' Association and the historic Rotkäppchen sparkling wine cellar, over 60 private wineries and the Pforta Monastery state winery with its wine taverns and wine taverns invite visitors to while away the hours and sample the wines.

Gourmet festivals: a culinary journey through the year

Gourmets and wine lovers will find opportunities for extensive tasting, sampling and feasting in Saale-Unstrut all year round. In spring, for example, the region's winegrowers and restaurateurs organise the "Young Wine Weeks" – a festival in the vineyards and wine taverns to celebrate the new vintages.

At the beginning of August, connoisseurs are invited to the "Wine Cellar and Vineyard Open Days" with tastings, vineyard tours and awards for top wines. And at "Advent in the Vineyards", wonderfully fragrant, flavoursome mulled wines from the winegrowers are served around a campfire and to handmade music.

Naumburg Stollen: a delicious piece of cultural heritage

There is a speciality in Saale-Unstrut in the run-up to Christmas: the Naumburg cherry stollen. First mentioned in writing in 1329 – 145 years before the Dresden Christmas Stollen – it is the oldest Christmas biscuit known as a stollen. Baker Rolf Block from Klosterhäsel, a tranquil village just outside Naumburg, has rediscovered it.

For a few years now, he has been preparing the Advent classic again, with cherries, cherry brandy and fine spelt flour. The Saale-Unstrut Tourism Association provides an overview of Saale-Unstrut's restaurants and winegrowers, as well as suitable tips and accommodation for a culinary journey on its website: www.saale-unstrut-tourismus.de.

From coal to wine

Gigantic bucket wheel excavators took over 1.4 billion tonnes of lignite out of the ground in the Geiseltal valley between Leipzig and Weimar. Today, Germany's largest artificial lake glistens here. A winegrower even harvests fine grapes on the former spoil tip

Coal mining characterised the Geiseltal for almost 300 years. Thousands found work in the mining industry or in the large chemical companies that were settling here. But 12,500 people also lost their homes and 16 places disappeared. The last coal train departed in 1993. This marked the beginning of structural change in the region. The open-cast mine pits were flooded. The 18 square kilometre Geiseltalsee was created, which is now part of the important Saale-Unstrut wine and cultural landscape.

The lake is a paradise for water sports enthusiasts, hikers and cyclists, but also for animals and plants. The Lausitzer und Mitteldeutsche Bergbau-Verwaltungsgesellschaft, which is responsible for the recultivation, planted trees and shrubs. For years, nature was allowed to develop almost untouched. Today, large areas are under nature conservation.

Reptiles and amphibians have made their home in the stones of the embankments and in the wetland biotopes. More than 220 bird species, including the bee-eater and the red kite, were counted. There are also 120 wild bee and 30 dragonfly species. The steppe-like dry areas are also a habitat for wild plants. A dozen species of orchid grow here, and sea buckthorn can also be found. Guided excursions and hikes into the natural paradise start regularly.

Viticulture on the spoil heap

Winemaker Lars Reifert grows grapes in the centre of this oasis. In 1997, when his father Rolf, an agricultural engineer and amateur winegrower, came up with the idea of a vineyard in a former open-cast lignite mine, the project seemed foolhardy. There was no sign of a lake back then, just a grey-brown lunar landscape as far as the eye could see. The recultivation work had only just begun.

But Rolf Reifert took a look at the profiling study and realised that an ideal vineyard would be created there. With a south-facing slope with a 30 per cent incline and the Geiseltalsee lake, which stores the sun's heat during the day and releases it to the grapes at night. "We have no frost, an average of two hours of sunshine a day more than in the Unstrut Valley and the average temperature is also two degrees higher," explains Lars Reifert. The winegrowing family planted their first vines in 2000 and received a future prize in 2008. The quality of their wines is consistently good thanks to the microclimate on the lake. As they grow in a nature reserve, fertilisers are taboo. This is why the soil has to be worked extensively every year. The vineyard is one of the highest forms of recultivation of former open-cast mining sites and was the first of its kind in Germany.

The "Goldener Steiger" vineyard, which was honoured by the German Wine Institute in 2020 with the most beautiful wine view in the Saale-Unstrut wine-growing region, is located directly on the 28-kilometre-long Geiseltalsee circular trail. From May to September, Lars Reifert and his team serve Pinot Blanc, Pinot Noir and Traminer, among other wines, in their wine tavern up here with the best panoramic views. The "Goldener Steiger", a fruity Müller-Thurgau, is particularly popular with guests.

Hiking on geological trails

The foundations for Saale-Unstrut as an outstanding wine-growing and holiday region were laid 250 million years ago. In the Saale-Unstrut-Triasland Geo-Nature Park, the history hidden deep within the earth's interior comes close enough to touch.

In Saale-Unstrut, you can experience one of the most impressive epochs in the history of the earth: the Triassic. At that time, around 250 million years ago, not only did the dinosaurs come into play, but rock layers of red sandstone, shell limestone and keuper were also formed. Since then, the Saale and Unstrut rivers have carved deep and wide valleys out of these sediments. The result is one of the most enchanting river landscapes in Germany, with steep slopes, idyllic floodplains and rare dry grasslands. Ideal for viticulture and ideal for hiking. Those interested in geology will also get their money's worth: While in other places the solid rock lies deep underground and is covered by vegetation, in the Saale-Unstrut-Triasland Geo-Nature Park, it can be found on the surface thanks to centuries of mining processes.

Some of the most exciting hiking trails through the Saale-Unstrut-Triasland:

Triassic Gate geological trail: On the trail of key habitats

Along the Unstrut, the strongest tributary of the Saale, the "Geopfad Trias-Tor" leads to the oldest rock layer of the Triassic period: the red sandstone. To the left and right of the river valley are the extensive quarry areas with red, yellow, white and green hues in the walls up to 20 metres high. From 1796, the quarried sandstone could be transported down steep ramps to the Unstrut and transported away by lorry cranes. This infrastructure made it possible to ship the rock throughout Germany. Nebra red sandstone was not only used in Saale-Unstrut, but also in the Old National Gallery in Berlin.

Along the hiking trail, there are many impressive quarries and interesting exhibitions along the way: The "Triassic Exhibition" at Nebra Church displays fossil finds and provides an overview of the geological formation of the Triassic period. And on the Mittelberg near Wangen, where the Nebra Sky Disc was found, the "Nebra Ark Visitor Centre" makes the fascination of the bronze disc with the oldest known depiction of the cosmos tangible.

Length: 8 kilometres, trail: Nebra - Kleinwangen - Bock Viewpoint - Vitzenburg - Arche Nebra - Großwangen - Nebra (Triassic exhibition)

Bad Kösen geological trail: Stone and salt

The "Geopfad Bad Kösen" follows the traces of limestone along the Saale. The up to one hundred metre high slopes of the meandering river shimmer white-grey. As early as the Middle Ages, people used limestone as a building material and built countless castles from it. Saaleck Castle and Rudelsburg Castle are famous. The Kunoklamm, a deep gorge in the shell limestone, runs between the castles. The Himmelreich viewpoint on the other side of the Saale offers a good overview, which can be reached via a narrow trail lined with shell limestone cliffs. The hiking trail continues through several small, disused quarries, past the still active Lengefeld quarry. Along the way you will see dry grassland vegetation of the kind usually found south of the Alps, such as Apennine sunflower, feather grasses and wild orchids.

Hikers encounter another white raw material on the geological trail: Salt from Bad Kösen. In the spa gardens, the historic salt works are a technical monument to the time when brine springs were found here and the town became a popular spa resort. To this day, spa guests appreciate the beneficial effects of the salty mist. The 320 metre-long graduation tower is still in operation and can be visited.

Length: 10 kilometres, trail: Bad Kösen - Loreleypromenade - Rudelsburg - Burg Saaleck - Saaleck - Stendorf - Himmelreich - Lengefeld - Kurpark Bad Kösen

Wine trails: To the fruits of the Triassic

Red sandstone and shell limestone are not only geologically interesting. They also have immense culinary significance: The mineral soils rich in these rocks are a blessing for viticulture on the Saale and Unstrut rivers. Here on the 51st latitude, the Triassic region produces outstanding wines with an unmistakable profile. Pleasure hikers stroll between lush vines, romantic natural stone walls and centuries-old steep terraces.

Unstrut wine trail

The "Unstrut wine trail" begins in Freyburg, the home of the famous Rotkäppchen sparkling wine. Numerous wineries invite you to take a break along the way. In the village of Zscheiplitz, the 12th century monastery church with its water tower dating from 1866 offers one of the most beautiful views of the Unstrut valley. The Pawis winery revives the former wine-growing tradition of the monastery in the historic estate and invites you to stop off at the wine tavern. On the last section of the trail back to Freyburg, information boards on the "Weininformationspfad" provide information about the work of the winegrowers and the grape varieties and vineyards in the region.

Length: 8 kilometres, trail: Freyburg - Rotkäppchen sparkling wine cellars - Schweigenberg hiking trail - Zeddenbachmühle - Zscheiplitz - Zscheiplitz Monastery - Pawis winery - Limestone quarries geological trail - Wine information trail - Freyburg

Saale wine trail

The "Saale wine trail" leads idyllically through the vineyards along the Saale. There are always new, impressive views of the Saale valley and its lovely vineyard cottages. From Naumburg, the trail leads through the enchanting Blütengrund, where the Saale and Unstrut rivers meet. The "Stone Picture Book" from the 18th century, carved into coloured sandstone, is one of the most unusual monuments and the largest pictorial relief ever carved into a rock in Europe. The circular trail continues through winegrowing villages to the Pforta Monastery state winery, which had a decisive influence on the local winegrowing tradition in the High Middle Ages. The winery invites you to wine tastings and to the estate's own vinothèque.

Length: 25 kilometres, trail: Naumburg - Hennebrücke - Blütengrund - Max-Klinger-Weinberg - Kleinjena - Roßbach - Kloster Pforta - Bad Kösen - Naumburg

"SaaleHorizontale"

Hiking with a view on the SaaleHorizontale hiking trail means pure hiking pleasure for active people. It stretches along the shell limestone slopes on both sides of the Saale between Jena and Dornburg. Fantastic views of the middle Saale valley can be enjoyed from numerous vantage points. The climbs are sometimes gentle, sometimes steeper, but are always rewarded by nature and scenery. On the SaaleHorizontale, they often reveal themselves from their most beautiful side. Pine groves, beech forests, orchards and field margins offer plenty of variety. Steep slopes promise spectacular photo opportunities. Luminous carpets of early bloomers, graceful orchids and the colourful autumn leaves leave an unmistakable impression. The Dornburg Castles, the ruins of Kunitzburg and Lobdeburg Castles, cosy little villages and ancient rocks are fascinating witnesses to history. In 2023, the SaaleHorizontale has been nominated as Germany's most beautiful hiking trail. The public vote will run from 13.01. to 30.06.2023.

Length: 91 km; Trail: Jena Klinikum - Kupferplatte - Wogau- Kunitz- Beutnitz - Kunitz - Dorndorf - Dornburg - Zwätzen - Papiermühle - Ammerbach - Göschwitz

"Trixi-Trias" dinosaur trail

Starting at the foot of the Jenzig, the dinosaur trail winds its way up to the top in several serpentine. Along the way, there are many stations where you can learn interesting facts about dinosaurs and their habitat in the Triassic period 250 million years ago. Geological features, fossils and the history of the Jenzig's origins are explained in an understandable way. The trail is especially designed for children – they follow dinosaur tracks from station to station and are accompanied by Trixi via audio guide. Once at the top, there is a fantastic view over the Saale valley and, if necessary, you can take a short break at the Jenzig mountain inn.

Length: 2 km

Cycling between wine and world heritage

Saale-Unstrut is the spring travel tip for cycling connoisseurs and pleasure cyclists. Culture, lifestyle and awakening nature create an invigorating blend in Germany's "Tuscany of the North".

Saale-Unstrut, which stretches from southern Saxony-Anhalt to northern Thuringia, is a picturesque spot in the heart of Germany and is highly regarded by connoisseurs as a quality wine-growing region. Old vineyards, steep terraces, natural stone walls and vineyard cottages characterise the landscape. The region is also famous for its rich treasure trove of castles, palaces and sacred buildings. It is still an insider tip as a cycling paradise. Spring and autumn are the best times to discover it.

What is good for the wine is also pleasant for cyclists: sheltered river valleys and a mild, dry climate. Varied cycle trails lead along the Saale and its tributaries through the region. Other themed trails provide cross-connections and circular tours. This opens up a wealth of options. It is important not to set the daily workload too high and to plan enough breaks for enjoyment and culture.

These are the most beautiful trails through Saale-Unstrut

"Saale" cycle trail

The "Saale" cycle trail is one of the most interesting river cycle trails in Germany. It runs for 409 kilometres from the Fichtelgebirge to Barby on the edge of the Magdeburger Börde. The trail takes you through fairytale forests, narrow gorges, medieval towns, past reservoirs, wine terraces, castles and palaces. Its most beautiful section leads right across Saale-Unstrut. The trail from Jena to Wettin comprises two magical daily stages totalling 130 kilometres.

Tip: Cyclists travelling with children or heavy luggage can take a diversion on the challenging section between Saaleck and Bad Kösen via the less busy L203.

→ www.saaleradweg.de

"Unstrut" cycle trail

The Unstrut is the most water-rich tributary of the Saale, into which it flows from the west after 190 kilometres in the Blütengrund near Naumburg. The Unstrut cycle trail, which accompanies the river, offers a brilliant finale on its last stage – Saale-Unstrut compact. Memleben is not only the start of the most scenically varied section of the entire course of the river, it is also home to the important Memleben Monastery and Imperial Palace Museum. The adventure centre at the site where the Nebra Sky Disc was found, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Burgscheidungen Castle with its magnificent castle park, followed by numerous wineries, Neuenburg Castle and the Rotkäppchen sparkling wine cellars in Freyburg and Naumburg with the UNESCO World Heritage Site Naumburg Cathedral.

Tip: You can use the "Lauschtour app" to hear local experts tell you interesting facts about the sights, flora, fauna and geology. Once started, the smartphone can stay in your pocket. The stations are automatically recognised by GPS.

→ www.unstrutradweg.de

"Elster" cycle trail

The Elster has its source in the Czech Elster Mountains and after 245 kilometres flows into the Saale shortly before Halle in beautiful countryside. Before that, it passes the towns of Oelsnitz, Plauen, Greiz, Gera, Zeitz and Leipzig. The accompanying cycle trail has two very different faces: The upper reaches are mountainous and challenging. The lower section is flat, largely tarmac and also a pleasure for leisure and family cyclists.

Tip: The cycling season starts on the Weiße Elster on 1 May from Zeitz. The tour leads 35 kilometres along the wine trail along the Weiße Elster and the "Elster" cycle trail through the beautiful Elster Valley.

→ www.elsterradweg.de

"Thüringer Städtekette" long-distance cycle trail

The "Thüringer Städtekette" runs from west to east across the "Green Heart of Germany" and connects seven of Thuringia's most beautiful towns. This long-distance cycle trail is particularly suitable for those interested in culture and touring cyclists. Along the 225 kilometres through Thuringia, there are always historic city centres, well-known sights and cultural highlights to stop off at. The well-known Thuringian cities are Altenburg, Gera, Jena, Weimar, Erfurt, Gotha, Eisenach, which invite you to spend quality time.

Tip: During a stop in Jena, it is worth enjoying the magnificent view over the city of Jena and the Jena shell limestone cliffs from the viewing platform of the JenTower at a height of 128 metres.

→ www.thueringer-staedtekette.de

The beautiful unknowns: Discover themed cycle trails

A speciality in Saale-Unstrut are the numerous themed cycle trails. They follow the traces of industrial culture, introduce you to viticulture, lead you to medieval castles and archaeological sensations

"Zuckerbahn" cycle trail, 37 kilometres

Sugar has been produced in Zeitz for over 160 years. The sugar beet once travelled from the fields to the factory by train. After the Camburg-Zeitz line was closed in 2000, it was threatened with decay – and oblivion. However, a sponsoring organisation is committed to turning the track bed into a cycle trail. The last section was completed in 2019. Since then, the 37-kilometre tour has linked the Elsterradweg in Zeitz with the "Saale" cycle trail in Camburg. Droyßig Castle with its restaurant, park and bear enclosure and Camburg Castle are worthwhile stops along the way.

Highlights for families include the Bärenatzenweg trail in Droyßig and the traditional archery course in the Stöbener Wald forest near Camburg. Kretzschau Youth Hostel offers the perfect overnight package for adventure-hungry families at the Wild West Camp. The cycle trail is marked with a green sign showing a cyclist in front of a railway signal.

→ www.saale-unstrut-tourismus.de/touren/zuckerbahnradweg/

"Recarbo-Kohle" cycle trail, 19 kilometres

Cyclists come across another piece of Zeitz's industrial history on the approximately 20-kilometre-long Recarbo-Kohle cycle trail, which can be recognised by a cycling mole. It leads through the oldest lignite mining area in Central Germany between Zeitz and Weißenfels. You should plan a day for the trail, as exciting adventure locations invite you to stop off. These include the Herrmannschacht briquette factory in Zeitz, whose history dates back to 1876. Guests will be able to visit them on guided tours as soon as the museum is allowed to reopen. The mining museum in Deuben can be visited by prior arrangement. Miniature open-cast mining equipment and a reconstructed deep mining tunnel bring mining history to life.

The end point is the Mondsee recreation park. Here, walkways with 15 stone slabs in a labyrinth of hornbeam hedges recall 15 places that have disappeared. They had to make way for open-cast mining after 1941. The recreation park itself was also once part of an open-cast mine. The Mondsee was created from the crescent-shaped residual hole by flooding at the end of the 1980s. Today, bathers, surfers and campers enjoy a break from everyday life here.

→ www.saale-unstrut-tourismus.de/touren/recarbo-kohle-rad-und-wanderweg/

"Goethe" cycle trail, 86 kilometres

If Johann Wolfgang von Goethe had got to know the modern bicycle, he would certainly have ridden his personal cycle trail with enthusiasm. The 86-kilometre "Goethe" cycle trail, signposted with the Goethe Silhouette, connects his place of work in Bad Lauchstädt with Halle and Bad Sulza, two places he also visited. The highlight of the tour is the Goethe town of Bad Lauchstädt. In 1802, the poet opened a theatre here, whose historic stage technology is still used today. From May, a tour guide as Christiane Vulpius will accompany visitors through the historic spa facilities of the former fashion spa by appointment.

The destination of the "Goethe" cycle trail is the spa town of Bad Sulza, where a copy of Goethe's garden house can be visited. After a long cycle tour, a visit to the Toskana Therme Spa in the village is a real treat. In the Liquid Sound Temple, guests float almost weightlessly in

the thermal brine water to underwater music. The vineyard on the Geiseltalsee, the Straußwirtschaft Köhler Wölbling and Boys Gutsausschank on the Unstrut invite you to stop for refreshments along the trail.

→ www.saale-unstrut-tourismus.de/touren/goetheradweg-nordumfahrung/

"Dolmen" cycle trail, 53 kilometres

A circular moat dating back 7000 years and a 5500-year-old grave are the highlights of the 53-kilometre "Dolmen" cycle trail. The tour starts in Querfurt, which is famous for its medieval castle. It has already served as the backdrop for cinema hits such as "Pope Joan and" "The Physician". In Langeneichstädt, cyclists discover the name of the cycle trail: This is where the old stone chamber tomb is located, which was discovered in 1987 and brought to light a menhir statue depicting a dolmen goddess.

At your destination in Goseck, it is worth visiting the solar observatory and the associated information centre in Goseck Castle, which explains the background to the circular moat. Culinary discoveries on the tour include the farm shop of the Müller fruit farm in Querfurt, the restaurants at the Müheln marina on Lake Geiseltalsee and the Venezia ice cream parlour in Markröhlitz.

→ www.saale-unstrut-tourismus.de/touren/dolmenradweg/

"Energie" cycle trail, 38 kilometres

The "Energie" cycle trail runs through the north of the Saaleland. With informative signposting and bioenergy plants open to visitors, the trail offers cyclists a varied programme for young and old.

Children can also discover the physical laws of renewable energies at the family playground in Schkölen. The "BarfussHaus" in Nickelsdorf provides an outlook on the home energy supply of the future. The building has a bio-boiler and a photovoltaic system and is, therefore, completely self-sufficient in renewable energy. Along the trail, farm shops and agricultural businesses with regional delicacies invite you to while away the hours. Due to the numerous climbs, an e-bike or pedelec is recommended for leisure cyclists.

→ www.saaleland.de/index.php/energie-radweg

"Thüringer Mühlen" cycle trail, 75 kilometres

The "Thüringer Mühlen" cycle trail is a circular cycle trail and is ideal for travelling in two to three days. The "Thüringer Mühlen" cycle trail leads through the Thuringian Mill Valley and the idyllic Zeitgrund with over 20, mostly former, water mills. The mills are located away from the villages on the water-rich streams of the forest valleys. Some mills still grind as they did centuries ago – but most mills are managed and invite you to rest and relax. As a circular trail, the cycle trail can be used from any point.

After 75 kilometres, the cyclist arrives back at the starting point. The "Thüringer Mühlen" cycle trail runs partly parallel to the Saale cycle trail and the Thuringian Chain of Towns long-distance cycle trail. As the cycle trail almost always runs alongside streams, the gradients are moderate. The natural trail, the many places to stop and rest and the few sections on busy roads make the "Thüringer Mühlen" cycle trail the ideal family excursion destination. Along the way, it is worth visiting the monastery church in Thalbürgel, the pottery town of Bürgel with its ceramics museum or Eisenberg with its baroque castle church.

→ www.saaleland.de/index.php/thueringer-muehlenradweg

Raft trips and canoe tours: Family fun in Saale-Unstrut

The Saale and Unstrut rivers meander through one of the most charming natural and cultural landscapes in central Germany. Castles, ruins and palaces tower high above the rivers on shell limestone cliffs. In the valley, the two waters flow leisurely along. This makes them ideal for a paddle trip with children. And amateur sailors are welcomed on the Geiseltalsee.

For paddling trips on the Saale and Unstrut rivers, providers have something for every level of ability, from half-day to multi-day tours. They hire out capsized-proof canoes and inflatable boats, life jackets, even in small children's sizes, and they organise the return transfer.

Paddling tours on the Unstrut

At Nebra canoe hire in Karsdorf, families can embark on a four-hour trip in stable canoes on the Unstrut, which only flows at one to two kilometres per hour. The village can be easily reached with the Unstrutbahn railway from Naumburg and Freyburg. The starting point is the hire station in Karsdorf, ten minutes from the railway station. The tour leads along 13 kilometres of the river past Burgscheidungen Castle, mighty cliffs and the vineyards near Laucha. The destination is the town of Laucha, famous for its bell foundry museum. From there, a transfer takes you back to the starting point.

Sports-loving families with children aged twelve and over combine water sports and cycling. In Laucha, you swap paddles for pedals and cycle along the Unstrut cycle trail past terraced vineyards to Freyburg, where the Rotkäppchen sparkling wine cellars are based. After a short break, we return to Karsdorf. The 40-kilometre combined tour takes around seven hours.

Paddle tours on the Saale

The 20-kilometre canoe tour **from Großheringen to Naumburg**, organised by Saale-Unstrut-Tours, offers a constant stream of charming views of the castles and vineyards along the Saale. The tour is particularly suitable for families with older children due to some gentle rapids. The highlight of the trail is the section near Saaleck. The picturesque ruins of Rudelsburg Castle and Saaleck Castle rise up on steep cliffs of shell limestone. In Bad Kösen, the 18th century graduation tower is impressive. The vineyards around the Kloster Porta state winery rise up behind Bad Kösen. The destination of the tour is the Naumburg Blütengrund. This is where the Unstrut flows into the Saale.

Day trips to Weißenfels, Bad Dürrenberg or further afield to Merseburg with its imperial cathedral are also possible.

Manfred Berro provides expert tips. The former Olympic and World Championship canoe slalom racer knows the waters inside out. He rents out rubber dinghies through his company Berrotours and offers guided tours.

If you would like to extend your time on the river and experience more highlights, we recommend two further tours (6 hours each).

The stretch **from Jena to Camburg** is particularly picturesque. Just past Jena, the view opens up to the Dornburg Castles towering high above the shell limestone cliffs. In 1828, Goethe was already enchanted by the "well-maintained gardens" and the vineyard, which is still being cultivated today. In Kaatschen, it's worth taking a break at the Zahn winery with its boat landing stage and bar.

You can also paddle beneath castles and palaces on the family-friendly trail **from Uhlstädt to Kahla**. The wooded trail begins in the traditional rafting village of Uhlstädt, past the Kemenate in Orlamünde, a residential tower from the 11th century, to Kahla. On the last section of the trail, Leuchtenburg castle with its modern porcelain world greets you from afar. A tip for experienced dinghy riders: There is a boat slide in Kahla that you should not miss. Canoeists are better off carrying their boats around the weir.

Paddle tour on the Weiße Elster

The adventure to Zeitz begins in Bad Köstritz. Incidentally, the river name "Elster" has nothing to do with ornithology, but with "to flow" and "to stream". For the first few kilometres, the Weiße Elster shows its most leisurely side, alternating between wooded, shaded sections and excitingly wide views along the banks of the river. A magnificent natural panorama opens up at Wetterzeube. At Haynsburg Castle, after a long walk, you can visit the museum, castle tavern and bat trail. Back on the water, the whitewater course begins for the canoeists from Zeitz, who have won eight gold, five silver and four bronze medals at world championships.

With raft and motorboat on the Geiseltalsee

The Geiseltalsee to the north of Naumburg has a maritime holiday feel. The body of water created by flooding a former open-cast lignite mine is Germany's largest artificial lake at 18 square kilometres. Until 1993, gigantic excavators and spoil conveyor bridges were still making noise here. That has long been forgotten. Today, boats sail across the crystal-clear water as if it had never been any different.

At the modern harbour facilities in Mücheln and Braunsbedra, licence-free rafts, motorboats, pedal boats and other boats such as donut-shaped barbecue boats can be hired. There is room for up to six people on a cosy barbecue raft. Mobile houseboats for overnight stays on the lake or even a sauna boat are also available to holidaymakers. Lake Geiseltal is also navigated by two passenger ships. The starting points are Marina Mücheln and Marina Braunsbedra.

Spend the night in a tipi and shepherd's huts

At Outtour in Kirchscheidungen on the Unstrut, families can hire more than just canoes and bikes. You will also find unusual places to stay here. An entire tipi village and a shepherd's hut with four berths are perfect for an adventure holiday by the river. A meadow for tents is also available. Campfire evenings, wine tasting and paddlers' breakfasts complete the experience close to nature.

Paddlers can spend the night in a tipi or in a trailer at the campsite in Orlamünde, run by the provider "Abenteuer" in Thüringen. At the barbecue area near the boathouse, you can relax with a Thuringian barbecue buffet after a day's water hiking on the Saale.

Salty time out: Saale-Unstrut health spring

Millions of years old salt is the basic element of healthy and relaxing winter breaks in Saale-Unstrut.

From spring to autumn, Saale-Unstrut is the destination for young active people, culture lovers and wine connoisseurs. In winter, the "Tuscany of the North" between Leipzig and Weimar is transformed into a source of health: The spa triangle of Bad Kösen, Bad Sulza and Bad Bibra and the resort town of Bad Dürrenberg have a centuries-old spa tradition. Healing impulses here come directly from nature – from brine springs. Spas, thermal baths and spa clinics use the healing effects of salt and brine and, together with the winter wine and cultural landscape, form a holistic pampering programme.

Bad Kösen: The fascination of graduation technology

The graduation tower on a hill above the Saale is a symbol of Bad Kösen's almost 400-year salt history. Its size is impressive: the structure, built in 1779 for salt extraction, is 325 metres long and 20 metres high. The plant's salt works was a technical sensation at the time and is no less fascinating today: Driven by a paddle wheel on the banks of the Saale, a double wooden linkage transmits water power to a shaft almost 200 metres away, from which the brine is pumped. The salt-enriched air around the complex has a particularly beneficial effect on walks through the neighbouring spa gardens.

Below the graduation tower, the Saale makes a wide curve. The Kösalina spa centre opened here at the beginning of 2016 with a brine spa, salt grotto, sauna area and brine steam bath. The centre offers taster cures to get to know the health courses: For one week, interested parties can test the effects of selected healing treatments under specialist medical supervision.

Bad Sulza: Floating in brine, light and sound

The spa and wine town of Bad Sulza lies to the south-west of Bad Kösen. The town in the Ilm valley had three graduation towers in the 18th century. The one with the name "Louise" and an atomiser hall has been preserved. In 1828, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe visited the town's salt works and advised the establishment of a spa business. Eleven years later, his idea began to become a reality. Within a short space of time, a drinking hall, a bathhouse and a spa clinic were built. Later, fountain pavilions and magnificent villas were added. Today, Bad Sulza is a state-recognised brine spa and the most traditional health resort in Thuringia.

The town is home to the Toskana Therme Spa, which offers a wide range of sauna, bathing and wellness facilities. The highlight is the Liquid Sound Temple. Here, body-warm thermal brine water from a healing spring ensures weightless relaxation. Spherical sounds under water and meditative plays of light and colour above also calm the mind. Full moon concerts are a monthly highlight. Every full moon, changing artists entertain the bathing guests with live music.

Bad Bibra: Fashion bath of the dukes

The third spa in the Saale-Unstrut spa triangle is Bad Bibra. The Dukes of Saxony-Weißenfels already valued the town for its iron-rich spring water, the health-promoting effects of which were scientifically confirmed as early as 1684. The nobles were far-sighted in their commitment to expanding the spa and bathing facilities at Bad Bibra. The spring was set in stone, built over with an eight-column pavilion and named "Gesundbrunnen". Other springs were added later, such as the "Heilandsquelle" and the "Schwesternquelle".

Bad Dürrenberg: from salt extraction to the healing power of brine

In Bad Dürrenberg, the 636 metre-long graduation facility is the longest in Germany. Johann Gottfried Borlach drilled for brine springs in the middle of the 18th century and found what he was looking for in "uff'm dürren Berge" at a depth of over 200 metres. This discovery turned the insignificant town into an important centre for salt production. Today, the Borlach Museum is located above the historic brine shaft. The graduation towers and the Borlach Museum are part of the European Trail of Industrial Heritage and will provide the setting for the 5th Saxony-Anhalt State Garden Show in 2023.

Bad Klosterlausnitz: Thermal spa relaxation and spa treatments

The state-recognised spa town of Bad Klosterlausnitz is surrounded by hills, forests and meadows. The Kristall-Therme with its large sauna area and saltwater pool are particularly popular. Modern rehabilitation clinics and the outpatient spa centre are dedicated to their patients and guests with various therapy concepts, as well as healing and relaxation treatments – supported by the local drinking healing water and natural moor. The park with monastery pond, bird aviary, herb garden and playground is located directly next to the spa centre and close to the spa clinics. In summer, concerts and events take place on the park stage.

Just like in a film: from location to location through Saale-Unstrut

Castles, palaces, cathedrals, monasteries and Italian flair: The high medieval cultural landscape on the Saale and Unstrut rivers has often served as a film set. If you take a stroll through the region, you will pass well-known film locations time and again.

"Pope Joan", "The Physician", "Monuments Men": Saale-Unstrut has already served as a film set in numerous national and international productions. It is above all the variety of impressive contemporary witnesses to the High Middle Ages that inspires directors, producers and location scouts. There are also magnificent baroque residences and towns in which the traces and wounds of the recent past can still be discovered. For travellers interested in culture, it is doubly exciting to experience the locations – on the one hand as filming locations and on the other as scenes of actual history.

Querfurt Castle – The perfect backdrop for movies: "The Popess", "The Physician" and "Räuber Hotzenplotz"

Querfurt Castle is right at the top of the list of the most popular backdrops in the region. It is the largest and oldest castle on the Romanesque Road. It was first mentioned in documents as early as the 9th century. However, its history probably goes back even further. Since its discovery as a location, the photogenic installation has already appeared in more than 50 productions. These include cinema and television hits such as "Pope Joan", "The Physician", "Die zertanzten Schuhe" and "Jorinde & Joringel". A production company only visited again in May 2021 to shoot scenes for "Räuber Hotzenplotz".

On the first Sunday of every month, special guided tours are offered for film enthusiasts by prior arrangement. For example, the historical costume workshop in the Donkey Stables will be opened with original costumes from major cinema productions. The highlight is the summer cinema in August. Querfurt Castle also repeatedly takes up the film theme in its special exhibitions.

Arche Nebra: "Bibi & Tina"

Around 17 kilometres further south of Querfurt Castle, Arche Nebra towers above the treetops on the Unstrut. The shimmering gold futuristic building symbolises the golden sun barque, an element on the famous Nebra Sky Disk, which was found nearby and is the focus of the visitor centre.

With a little imagination, however, you could also picture the house as the eccentric mansion of a megalomaniac crook. At least that's what Detlef Buck did when he was looking for locations in Saale-Unstrut for his film "Bibi & Tina": "We were inspired and thought: this would be the ideal home for an antagonist à la Goldfinger," he said in an interview. And indeed, in the film it looks as if the villain Kakmann, played by Charly Hübner, has his luxurious headquarters in the Arche Nebra.

The staff at Arche Nebra have a documentary on the filming which they are happy to make available to interested visitors.

Weißenfels: "Es war einmal Deutschland" and "Adam & Evelyn"

Weißenfels, the residential town on the Saale, was transformed into bombed-out Frankfurt am Main after the Second World War in 2016 during the shooting of the film "Es war einmal

Deutschland...". Actor Moritz Bleibtreu can be seen walking through Nordstrasse and Weinbergstrasse. Children pull their miserable belongings on a handcart through the devastated city, a woman washes her feet in a bucket next to piles of rubble. "It's very rare that the city makes it possible to convert an entire street in the centre into a film set," said director Sam Garbarski. Moritz Bleibtreu plays David Bermann, who wants to earn the money to emigrate to the USA with his six Jewish friends by selling laundry.

A year later, the film team led by director Andreas Goldstein also used those streets to shoot "Adam & Evelyn". This time Weißenfels was transported back to the year 1989. Instead of a horse-drawn carriage and handcart, the main character drives through the streets in a sky-blue Wartburg. Film fans exploring Weißenfels will rediscover the backdrops for the two shoots in the Neustadt district with its houses from the Wilhelminian era.

Zeitz: "Das Mädchen mit den goldenen Händen"

Director Katharina Marie Schubert and producer Ingo Fliess found what they were looking for in Zeitz. For their film "Das Mädchen mit den goldenen Händen", which premiered at the Munich Film Festival on 3 July and will be released in cinemas at the end of the year, they looked for a small East German town that had not yet been completely modernised. "It's great here," enthused Ingo Fliess in an interview during filming. What characterises Zeitz, the producer told the magazine zeitonline.de, is its former importance as a cathedral city, which is reflected in its architecture. Here, he discovered streets where you can see the past. This is important for a film set in 1999. In the film, leading actress Corinne Harfouch embodies an indomitable woman who wants to save a former, neglected children's home, where she herself grew up, from being sold to an investor.

The social upheavals have left their mark on Zeitz: This makes the city interesting not only for filmmakers. The search for film locations here is always an encounter with over 1000 years of history. It comes to life during guided tours of the town, cathedral and castle, which can be booked at the Tourist Information Centre.

Merseburg Cathedral and the "Schulpforte": George Clooney and "The Story of the Youth Who Went Forth to Learn What Fear Was"

Hollywood star George Clooney chose Merseburg Cathedral as the backdrop for his film "Monuments Men" in 2013. In the final scene, the Ladegast organ is unmistakably visible. Film fans can visit the magnificent cathedral, which is over 1000 years old, and the organ. Their variety of sounds can be experienced at the Merseburg Organ Days from 11 to 19 September. On the occasion of the 1000th anniversary of the consecration of Merseburg Cathedral, valuable pieces have also returned from the Dresden State Art Collections for a special exhibition, which can be seen until 31 October.

Schulpforte is also a filming location worth seeing. The former Cistercian monastery is home to a boarding school steeped in tradition, where Nietzsche, Fichte and Klopstock were all students. The cloister was the filming location for "The Pope", and the fairytale film "The Story of the Youth Who Went Forth to Learn What Fear Was" was shot in the monastery church. Schulpforte can be visited daily, and the cloister can also be seen during a guided tour.

Leuchtenburg Castle and Kahla in the Weimar crime scene

The crime scene from Weimar took the two detectives Lessing and Dorn to the Saale in 2019. The "Queen of the Saaleland", as Leuchtenburg Castle is also known, became Schwanitz Castle in the film. The locations of the bizarre plot about the "Scheidende Schupo" were the herb garden, the largest and smallest vase in the world and the traditional porcelain factory in Kahla, which are easily recognisable when visiting Leuchtenburg Castle.

Why not get married the unusual way: Amazing wedding venue

Saale-Unstrut, a Mediterranean vineyard landscape in the heart of Germany, is not only rich in history, but also in unusual and picturesque places to get married. The local tourism association presents the most beautiful and unusual locations.

Craftsmanship: Old forge in the Herrmannschacht Zeitz

What was once unimaginable for the workers at the Herrmannschacht in Zeitz is now very popular with couples: You can get married in the oldest briquette factory in the world, where coal dust used to hang in the air and briquette presses rattled tirelessly. The Alte Schmiede provides the backdrop for an unforgettable wedding at this incomparable industrial heritage site. Here, between anvil, forge fire, tongs and bellows, couples say "I do" or forge their personalised rings. The Zeitz registry office organises wedding ceremonies.

Bridal couples can also hire the smithy, which can accommodate around 30 guests, for their celebration. Larger still are the drying room, where the briquettes were once dried, and the parlour. Up to 80 or 100 guests can celebrate together there.

Opulent: Moritzburg Castle and Zeitz Castle Park

The early Baroque Moritzburg Castle in the centre of Zeitz, once the residence of the Dukes of Saxony-Zeitz with the Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul, offers a contrast to the wedding in the Herrmannschacht. The grounds are integrated into an extensive castle park, which was redesigned for the first State Garden Show in Saxony-Anhalt. These include an orangery with a baroque parterre, playful pleasure gardens and an English landscape park.

For weddings, the Japanese Garden, which was modelled on a temple garden by Japanese landscape gardeners, is transformed into a green wedding room. Couples say "I do" between undulating gravel, stones, rhododendrons and azaleas. This makes the wedding an exclusive experience.

The baroque wedding room is available for weddings in the castle, as is the old defence tower in the castle park. The castle and park offer countless charming backdrops for wedding photos. While the newlyweds have their photos taken, the guests are given a guided tour of the facility. Afterwards, you can celebrate in the restaurant in the orangery or in the Klinkerhallen on the edge of the castle park.

Sophisticated: Goethe town of Bad Lauchstädt

With its elegant spa facilities, Bad Lauchstädt was one of the most glamorous spas of its time in the 18th century. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, Richard Wagner and even Elector Friedrich August III enthused about the "Saxon Pyrmont". Goethe opened a theatre here in 1802. Today it is the only surviving theatre building from the Goethe era. The picturesque Christiane-Vulpius-Pavillon is a romantic location for open-air weddings in the centre of the historic spa gardens, right by the water. Afterwards, the bride and groom and their guests stroll along crunching trails in the shade of tall trees to the Kurpark Hotel or the late Baroque Kursaal.

Chivalrous: Neuchâtel and Rudelsburg Castle

A breath of eternity wafts through the ancient walls with which Saale-Unstrut is richly blessed. One of the most impressive sights is Neuenburg Castle, situated high above the winegrowing town of Freyburg. The history of what was once the largest castle complex of the Landgraves of Thuringia dates back to 1090. A special gem on the site is the double chapel built in the 12th century, a rare example of late Romanesque ornamentation in the world. Church weddings are possible here. The historic hunting room is available for civil marriages. The bridal couple can then celebrate in style with up to 80 guests in the ballroom.

The "most beautiful of all Saale castles", Rudelsburg Castle near Bad Kösen, also offers a film-ready wedding backdrop. Much smaller than Neuenburg Castle but thoroughly medieval is the former border fortification built around 1050. The castle was largely destroyed during the Thirty Years' War, but what remains is still the epitome of castle romance today. Its picturesque location on a rocky promontory above the Saale river with fantastic views makes Rudelsburg Castle a much sought-after location. The town of Naumburg organises civil wedding ceremonies in the historic wedding room. In the castle courtyard, between thick walls and under shady trees, guests can toast with a glass of sparkling wine. Afterwards, the castle restaurant spoils the revellers with knightly or classic Thuringian dishes.

Mysterious: Vaults at the old stone oven in Bad Dürrenberg

Probably the most unusual wedding room in the region is located in Bad Dürrenberg in the Old Salt Office, now the registry office. Here, brides and grooms can exchange their vows in a rustic, 500-year-old vault, which houses what is probably the oldest stone oven in Germany. Candlelight and the illumination of the stone walls emphasise the historical and mysterious aura of the place. In the immediate vicinity, the romantic banks of the Saale, the longest graduation tower in Europe and the extensive spa gardens with rare trees and some old palm trees invite you to take a stroll with your party.

Picturesque: Max Klinger vineyard in Naumburg

The Art Nouveau artist Max Klinger called Saale-Unstrut the "Tuscany of the North". Perhaps he was inspired by the view of the vineyard terraces and the Saale-Unstrut valley from his house. With this unforgettable view, you can get married in the wedding room in the Max Klinger vineyard in Naumburg and then celebrate in the vineyard café with its panoramic terrace and romantic chimney house.

Information on these and other unusual wedding venues in Saale-Unstrut, such as the planetarium in Merseburg, the pier and harbour tower on Lake Geiseltal or the historic Novalis Pavilion in Weißenfels, can be obtained from the tourist office at 03445233790.

Into the past via app

Videos, audio pieces, digital scavenger hunts: At more and more places in Saale-Unstrut, visitors can take a multimedia journey into history via smartphone. With a wide range of new apps and digital tours, the region invites you to immerse yourself in history at original locations using multimedia.

App – Battlefield Trail Lützen: Fighters tell their story

Two mighty armies meet on the fields of Lützen near Leipzig in November 1632. Albrecht von Wallenstein (1583-1634) led the imperial Catholic army, the Protestant army was led by the Swedish King Gustav II Adolf (1594-1632). After more than six hours, the Swedish king and more than 8000 soldiers fell. It is one of the most famous battles of the Thirty Years' War.

The "Lützen 1632 battlefield trail" leads from the Gustav Adolf memorial site along seven kilometres of country lanes to the town of Lützen. Along the way, nine stations with life-size metal silhouettes invite you to pause and listen to the stories of the protagonists of the battle via app. Among other things, visitors can hear the bloodcurdling battle cry of the infamous Finnish Hakkapelite cavalry unit and learn how the Imperial Field Marshal zu Pappenheim experienced his last minutes.

The app with the location-based audio guide to the battlefield trail can be downloaded at Lützen Castle and the Gustav Adolf Memorial using a smartphone with QR codes. In 2023, the new "Lützen 1632" museum will open at the memorial site, which will exhibit the mass grave that archaeologists discovered on the battlefield in 2011.

Museum app Heinrich Schütz House: at home with the father of German music

The Thirty Years' War also left its mark on the composer Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672), who spent his childhood and old age in Weißenfels, just 15 kilometres from Lützen. In his works, the "father of German music" deals with the devastation of the time as well as the longing for peace.

A museum app from the Heinrich Schütz House in Weißenfels takes you on a digital tour of the musician's former home in German and English. In pictures, radio plays, pieces of music, texts and videos, visitors can find out how Heinrich Schütz lived. With the Actionbound app, guests also have the opportunity to discover the Heinrich Schütz House in a playful way. Then you have to answer ten quiz questions in a scavenger hunt.

In Zeitz, visitors immerse themselves in the world of Heinrich Schütz in a different way. In a new digital sound trail through Moritzburg Palace Park, Christoph Tobias Schober, a musician at the Zeitz royal court, talks about the composer's life, narrated by actor Martin Wimmer. Participants start the sound trail with stories and audio pieces on their smartphone using a QR code.

Musical-artistic city tour Löbejün: Encounter with Carl Loewe

A city tour in Löbejün in the north of Saale-Unstrut traces another composer. In the birthplace of Carl Loewe (1796-1869), revered as the master of the ballad, seven façades and gables of historic buildings have been covered with banners designed by students at Merseburg University of Applied Sciences since 2021. They deal with the life and work of the Romantic. QR codes on the banners take interested parties to the Carl Loewe Society's website for sound samples and explanations of the ballads realised through visual art.

Digital theatre walk Naumburg: Listen to audio stories

A digital city tour was created in Naumburg in 2021. It is a result of the cultural lockdown in the coronavirus era. Actors and musicians developed an acoustic theatre walk during the months in which they were unable to perform. In front of pubs, gates, walls, fountains and trees, at a total of 14 locations in the city, guests listen to excerpts from plays, poems, songs and historical events on their smartphones. The map with the stations and audio tracks can be accessed on the move using a smartphone.

Lialo-Webapp Walk through the castle park Ostrau: A guest of Hans-Hasso von Veltheim

Squire, world traveller, writer, anthroposophist: Hans-Hasso von Veltheim (1885-1956) was a colourful personality. From 1927, the nobleman renovated Ostrau Castle, 60 kilometres north of Naumburg, and its park, one of the oldest landscaped gardens in Germany. Until the outbreak of the Second World War, it was a meeting place for scientists and artists. A new digital walk introduces you to von Veltheim. This unique individual tells us about his family history, takes us to exotic trees and favourite places and sets us tricky tasks. The tour works without registration or download and is available via the Lialo web app.

Actionbound app nature trail Sprohne: Learning through play

Players can also explore the Sprohne nature trail in the Lower Saale Valley Nature Park by solving puzzles. Using the Actionbound app, visitors follow a two-kilometre hiking trail. In between, visitors solve quizzes on the topics of the nature park, landscape development, riparian forest and river straightening. Points are awarded for every correct answer, so that the hike along the nature trail can be turned into a small competition.

Natura-Jenensis app: encounter dinosaurs, Ottonians and Napoleon in Jena

Three adventure trails in and around Jena, 35 kilometres south of Naumburg, take you into virtual worlds of bygone times with exciting puzzles. On the "Trixi Trias" dinosaur trail, prehistoric animals come to life with the help of an app. The Ottonian Trail takes visitors digitally back to the Middle Ages and the Napoleon Trail takes visitors back to 1806, when the French army under Napoleon defeated the Prussian army. Augmented reality elements on the trails turn the past into an experience in the present. The Schlauer Ux forest trail, which focuses on nature and the climate, is particularly recommended for families with children.

Web app "Kreis von Goseck": become part of the fictional story yourself

With the help of the web app "Kreis von Goseck", puzzle lovers can discover the entire Saale-Unstrut region. It makes participants themselves part of an exciting story and guides them to 40 excursion destinations. On the way, they receive tasks on their smartphone that have to be solved on site.

→ www.saale-unstrut-tourismus.de/8-digitale-fuehrungen/

→ www.saale-unstrut-tourismus.de/audiowalks-in-saale-unstrut/

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