On the move. In Hessen.

Want to know more? Our fold-out map quickly shows you the location of your personal favorites in Hessen, how to get to them, and other places worth visiting on route.

We have highlighted eleven nature parks, one national park, one biosphere reserve, six UNESCO World Heritage sites, and Towns and cities of all sizes.

Contrasts and diversity are what characterize Hessen's cultural attractions. Around 350 castles and palaces, more than 300 museums, abbeys, parks, and gardens, plus countless cultural events await you. This map shows you a small cross-section of the tourist activities on offer.

Find ideas and inspiration. There is so much to discover when you’re out and about in Hessen.
Getting to Hessen.

With its central location and excellent connections, you are almost bound to pass through Hessen as you travel across Europe. Frankfurt Airport is a major hub for international flights. And the main north-south and east-west high-speed rail routes cross in Kassel, Fulda, and Frankfurt. River cruises pass through Hessen on the Rhine and Main rivers. Autobahns and other fast roads put neighboring urban regions within easy reach — whether by car or using one of the many low-cost coach services.

Why not pay us a visit?

Frankfurt am Main — the skyline is a draw for tourists and business travelers alike. Frankfurt Airport: the be-all and end-all of airports. Around 100 airlines operate direct flights to every continent, with some 60 million passengers arriving, departing, and changing here each year. Frankfurt’s main train station is one of the largest railway terminals in Europe and sees roughly 350,000 people pass through every day. It is served by InterCityExpress trains, regional train services, and local public transport.
Welcome to Hessen.

Come and visit this multi-faceted region situated at the very heart of Europe. Feel the wind at your back high up in the Hessen hills or, elsewhere, get a sense of the local history. Archaeological digs offer finds from Roman times, while castles and palaces recall the heyday of Europe’s nobility.

As well as historical sites that document the growth of the bourgeoisie, you will come across places where significant chapters in German and European history are being written to this day.

Hessen is ideal for a vacation, whether you prefer getting in shape on an active holiday or relaxing and getting to know the locals in one of the quaint apple wine bars with their wooden benches. Enjoy traditional cultural events and avant-garde productions. Stroll along the modern shopping boulevards or dive into the medieval lanes and alleyways of Hessen’s towns and villages. Admire the stunning scenery and explore the dynamic cities.

Wherever you go, whatever you visit, you will find that the locals are welcoming and cosmopolitan. Welcome to our Hessen.
Take a deep breath. And relax. In Hessen.

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Regions of Hessen.

Only around 300 kilometers separate Bad Karlshafen in the very north of Hessen from Viernheim at the southern tip. But in between, there are all kinds of things to see and experience, from densely wooded hills to idyllic meadows, from pretty countryside to the buzzing Frankfurt Rhine-Main region. **Discover the sheer variety of Hessen’s regions.**

The Rheingau and Bergstrasse regions are full of half-timbered buildings and vineyards, the perfect backdrop as you sample last year’s riesling in one of the many traditional taverns and try out some of Hessen’s local dishes.

Hessen is crisscrossed by waterways big and small that create a beautiful **river landscape**: the banks of the Rhine and Main are lined with broad meadows, while forests, fields and fruit trees can be found along the Eder, Werra, and Fulda to the north and along the Lahn, a tributary of the Rhine.

**Hills** – sometimes gently rolling, sometimes steep – are a feature of Hessen’s scenery. Northern Hessen boasts dense forests, including the Reinhardswald, Kaufunger Wald, and Kellerwald. The hills of the Odenwald and Rhön regions offer amazing views. The Taunus, Westerwald, Vogelsberg, and Spessart regions attract visitors in need of relaxation as well as those with energy to spare.
Town and cities in Hessen.

UNESCO World Heritage at the Abbey and Altenmünster of Lorsch, the filming of Umberto Eco’s The Name of the Rose at Eberbach Abbey, presentation of the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade at the Church of St. Paul in Frankfurt – Hessen’s abbeys and churches are places of spirituality, monuments to great culture, and centers of secular intellectual life.

Fulda – over 1,250 years of fascinating history. The town’s most famous landmark is its baroque cathedral, which forms an ensemble with the orangery, Residenzschloss palace, and Adelspalais. St. Michael’s Church can trace its history back to the early Middle Ages, with its crypt dating back to Carolingian times. Carefully maintained timber-framed houses surround picturesque courtyards, a perfect place to while away the day.

Rising high above the town of Limburg, the late-Romanesque St. George’s Cathedral is the episcopal church of the diocese of Limburg. Walk down the hill from the cathedral and you will arrive in the old quarter, much of which dates back to the 13th century. The Römer 2-4-6 building is thought to be the oldest detached house in Germany.

The cathedral in Wetzlar is a remarkable patchwork of architectural history, with Romanesque, Gothic, and Baroque features. It is therefore only fitting that it is today used as a place of worship for both Catholics and Protestants.
The Rhine-Main Route of Industrial Heritage explores the history of industrial manufacturing and its associated infrastructure. In Rüsselsheim, the townscape is shaped by the factories of carmaker Opel. Spanning 130 years, from Germany’s industrial heyday in the 19th century, through neo-classicism and the Bauhaus, to the modern age, this industrial architecture is an example of living history. Today, the Opel villas are a center for art. Famous for its leather industry, Offenbach is also a hive of culture. Isenburg Palace is now the home of the illustrious University of Art and Design. In the cultural quarter, the Lili temple recalls Goethe’s young sweetheart, while Büsing Palace houses the Klingspor Museum featuring modern book design, typography, and type.

Multicultural Hessen.

It is not only transport routes that cross in Frankfurt am Main, center of the Rhine-Main region. The city is also a meeting point of cultures and historical epochs. Beneath Germany’s only skyscraper skyline, archaeological excavations from antiquity can be found near Römerberg square. People from 180 nations live in this city. It boasts a unique string of museums along the southern bank of the Main and a thriving drama, opera, and fringe theater scene. Frankfurt is also the home of techno and a hotspot for LGBT travel.
Science and learning in Hessen.

The Mathildenhöhe artists’ colony with its art nouveau ensemble is one of the most famous landmarks of Darmstadt, historically known as the Lilienstadt (lily city). Since 2007, Darmstadt has been a designated city of science: The Technical University and countless scientific institutions engage in research and development for technology firms here. Darmstadt is also the seat of the European Space Operations Centre. The new Darmstadtium, designed by renowned architect Talik Chalabi, is worthy of the city’s academic and scientific status.

The Philipps University in Marburg was the first Protestant university to be established, nearly 500 years ago, and still enjoys an excellent reputation today. Besides the landgraves’ castle, Marburg has a delightful old quarter with carefully restored half-timbered buildings and enjoys an idyllic setting on the banks of the Lahn.

The chemist Justus von Liebig was once a researcher and lecturer at the University of Giessen. His original laboratory is on show in the Liebig Museum, while the Mathematikum is the world’s first hands-on museum of mathematics, where visitors of all ages can experiment and explore.

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Take a deep breath. And relax. In Hessen.
Spa culture in Hessen.

Hessen boasts 30 spas and health resorts, focusing on everything from natural healing resources and hydrotherapy to mineral springs and curative climates. Modern spa facilities, high-quality medical treatment, well-maintained traditional architecture, and a distinctly warm welcome are what makes this such a restful and therapeutic place.

Thermal springs have given Wiesbaden a reputation as a health resort since Roman times. Today, this chic city combines elegance with well-being and has a high-caliber arts scene.

For fans of art nouveau, Bad Nauheim is a must. Its Sprudelhof bath houses are Europe’s largest art nouveau ensemble of buildings and are surrounded by extensive parkland. Fresh sea breezes from the salt-evaporation works give the impression the coast is not far away.

Bad Homburg vor der Höhe still maintains an air of exclusivity today. Its reputation rests on its twelve drinking and bathing springs. The elegant spa assembly rooms and a casino provide a glamorous setting to while away the time between treatments.

Lullus and Vitalis are the names of the mineral waters recommended as drink cures in Bad Hersfeld. But the town is much more than a health resort, staging various events such as the Lullus Festival, the theater festival in the monastery ruins, and jazz weekends.

From active holidays to spa breaks: Highlights of the quaint town of Bad Orb in the Spessart hills include the Toskana-Therme baths, salt-evaporation works, Germany’s longest barefoot trail, and a miniature steam railway known as Emma, making it a perfect swimming, wellness, and family destination.
Scenic routes of Hessen. German Fairytale Route

For 200 years, the fairytales of brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm have accompanied generation after generation through childhood. Along the German Fairytale Route you will find towns, villages, and landscapes associated with their lives and their stories. It offers museums and festivals, guided tours, adventure parks, and castles perched on hilltops.

Step into a fairytale in Hanau, birthplace of the Brothers Grimm. Their stories are told anew every year at the Brothers Grimm Festival, held in the amphitheater at Philippruhe Palace. Situated on Weinberg hill in Kassel, the brand-new GRIMMWELT attraction explores the many aspects of the work carried out by these two linguists, whose reputation as collectors of fairytales extends worldwide. The Kassel annotated reference copies of Grimms’ Fairytales, which are included in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register, are also on show here. Or why not step into the shoes of a heroic prince when you visit the Sababurg, or Sleeping Beauty’s castle, nestled in the Reinhardswald forest?

Hanau, Brothers Grimm Festival

Hofgeismar, the Sababurg or Sleeping Beauty’s castle
Discovering recent history in Hessen.

Plenty of people from Hessen emigrated ‘across the pond’ to try their luck in the New World. But many from the United States have also helped to shape Hessen’s history and culture. You can follow in their footsteps as you travel around Hessen.

After the Second World War, General Dwight D. Eisenhower set up his headquarters in the former IG Farben building in Frankfurt am Main. Many key decisions relating to the foundation and development of the modern Federal Republic of Germany were discussed and prepared in this extensive complex designed by architect Hans Poelzig. Today, the site houses part of the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University and is open to the public.

Probably the most famous GI to be stationed in Hessen was Elvis Presley. The king of rock’n’roll arrived in the modest spa town of Bad Nauheim in 1958. He even met his future wife Priscilla here. The European Elvis Festival is held every August: three days devoted to rock’n’roll, with cover bands and movies, not to mention a Cadillac procession.

William Forsythe, the New York-born dancer and choreographer, began his international career at the Frankfurt Ballet. The Forsythe Company, an ensemble founded by him in 2005, is the company in residence at the Bockenheimer Depot and performs there regularly as the Dresden Frankfurt Dance Company under its new artistic director Jacopo Godani.

Many nightclubs in the towns and cities where the GIs were stationed became legendary: Funkadelic in central Frankfurt, the Village Club in Hanau, and Dorian Gray in the basement of Frankfurt Airport – Germany’s first large-scale nightclub, built along US lines. Even today, Frankfurt with its vibrant and diverse music and club scene remains a multicultural hotbed for pop, rock, R&B, hip-hop, break dancing, and techno.

The ruins of Castle Frankenstein near Darmstadt inspired US soldiers to hold the first big Halloween party on German soil in the 1970s. Nowadays, thousands of people put on costumes and descend on the castle to enjoy spine-chilling open-air shows and attractions on the three weekends around Halloween.
Take a deep breath. And relax. In Hessen.
Hiking in Hessen.

Hiking is one of the best ways to explore Hessen’s diverse upland scenery up close. Walking maps and apps will help you navigate the excellent network of signposted paths, which offer more than 3,000 kilometers of premium trails. And there are plenty of accommodation establishments that welcome weary walkers.

A far cry from the hustle and bustle of the city center, Frankfurt’s Green Belt Circular Trail was recently designated Germany’s best footpath in the ‘towns & cities’ category.

The narrow paths of the Rheinsteig Trail link spectacular viewpoints from the Rheingau and the Loreley to where the Rhine meets the Lahn. Keen hikers have 4,000 meters of altitude variation to tackle on the Nibelung Trail, which starts in the Bergstrasse region and traverses the entire Odenwald forest before finishing in the Main valley near Freudenstadt.

The Edersee Forest Walk, a trail around Germany’s second-largest reservoir, is in a class of its own. Along the Upper Taunus Limes Trail, you will come across old Roman fortifications and the reconstructed Roman fort at Saalburg.
Cycling in Hessen.

Whether with friends or family, whether by road bike, mountain bike, or e-bike, the 3,300 kilometers of long-distance cycle routes in Hessen are a great way to explore the region. A cycle route planner available in five languages will help you prepare your journey, while its GPS tracking will guide you to your destination.

Once forming part of the border between East and West Germany, the Werra river used to be heavily guarded and impassable. Nowadays, the **Werra Valley Cycle Route** lets you pedal between pretty little towns full of half-timbered houses, including Eschwege, Bad Sooden-Allendorf, and the ‘cherry town’ of Witzenhausen. A popular stop-off for cyclists is Wanfried, where you will see that the Werra was once a navigable waterway.

The **Rhine-Main regional park’s circular trail** attracts cycling enthusiasts and casual recreational riders alike with its meadow orchards, beer gardens, and riverscapes set against the backdrop of the Taunus hills. On the Hessen stretch of the **Rhine Cycle Route**, you will come across vineyards overlooking the water and ships making their way down the river. Smooth asphalt trails – mostly car-free – make up the **Lahn Valley**.

**Cycle Route** running from the Vogelsberg hills to Limburg. The **Hessen Railway Cycle Route** follows nearly 250 kilometers of disused railway lines through the Vogelsberg and Rhön hills. Some of it overlaps with the **Volcano Cycle Trail**. The **Diemel Cycle Route** offers a leisurely tour through villages and towns of timber-framed houses, from the Waldeck Upland region to the Weser river in Bad Karlshafen.
From Kassel to Darmstadt, Hessen surprises visitors with its rich cultural life. While the documenta art exhibition (held every five years) displays unusual contemporary works, the Städel Museum has a more traditional collection. The museums along the southern bank of the river Main in Frankfurt form an unparalleled ensemble featuring many different retrospectives, styles, and epochs. Established theater and opera companies, orchestras, and soloists compete for audiences alongside a vibrant fringe scene. World-renowned jazz musicians are just as much at home here as techno and rap artists.

Spring marks the start of festival season in Hessen. The International May Festival in Wiesbaden combines the style and flair of the state capital with a high-caliber program featuring artists from all over the world. Early June sees the start of the Bad Hersfeld Festival, which takes place against the magnificent backdrop of the world’s largest Romanesque church ruins. The Weilburg Palace Concerts have made a name for themselves as a ‘mini Salzburg’. Away from the cities of the Rhine-Main region, the classical music scene attracts distinguished Echo and Grammy prizewinners as well as up-and-coming talent. Palaces, castles, abbeys, and wine taverns are transformed into venues for the Rheingau Music Festival, which runs from late June to mid-September and features more than 150 concerts, from classical to jazz.
Culture in Hessen. UNESCO World Heritage.

Hessen’s UNESCO World Heritage sites offer a fascinating journey through time. They bear witness both to the dawn of mankind and to artistic modernity: stone monuments to cultural epochs, landscapes that have been shaped by man over the centuries, and unspoiled nature captivate today’s visitors.

UNESCO World Heritage sites in Hessen: **Abbey and Altenmünster of Lorsch, Messel Pit Fossil Site, Upper Middle Rhine Valley, Upper Germanic-Rhaetian Limes, Ancient Beech Forests of Germany, and Bergpark Wilhelmshöhe.**

The **Messel Pit Fossil Site** documents the emergence of mammals 50 million years ago. The **Upper Germanic-Rhaetian Limes** were unable to protect the Romans against advancing Germanic tribes. At the former Benedictine **Abbey and Altenmünster of Lorsch**, the King’s Hall is a monument to one of the most influential imperial abbeys of the Carolingian era. The **Upper Middle Rhine Valley** combines unspoiled nature with landscapes that have been shaped by man. Hessen’s newest addition to the UNESCO World Heritage list is **Wilhelmshöhe Park in Kassel**, a masterpiece of landscape architecture with a cascade that is the only one of its kind in the world.
Take a deep breath.
And relax. In Hessen.
Nature in Hessen.

Hessen has beautiful and priceless nature. So that it stays this way, one third of the state is under special protection: as a national park, biosphere reserve, or one of eleven nature parks. They enable visitors to admire these stunning landscapes while ensuring the flora and fauna have the necessary space to thrive undisturbed – so that many generations to come can continue to enjoy nature’s rich bounty.

In 2011 the Kellerwald-Edersee National Park was designated part of the UNESCO World Heritage Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Ancient Beech Forests of Germany. This paradise can be explored on a network of winding trails, sections of which are accessible to people with restricted mobility.

Hessen’s part of the Rhön UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, which extends into Bavaria and Thuringia, is not only perfect for hiking and cycling, it also lends itself to being viewed from the air. The Bergstrasse-Odenwald Geo Nature Park offers 30 different discovery trails. The Felsenmeer in the Lautertal valley is a spectacular collection of rock formations.
Food & drink in Hessen.

From asparagus and sausage to Frankfurt’s famous green sauce

The people of Hessen know how to enjoy themselves and are happy to share their zest for life with visitors. In the large cities, you will find almost every international cuisine represented, while rural areas are the place to enjoy authentic local specialties. Hessen is known for its traditional dishes made from seasonal and locally sourced ingredients.

Ahle wortscht, a cured pork sausage made from the meat of pigs from northern Hessen, is best sliced and served with dark bread. A popular, hearty lunchtime snack is Frankfurt sausages, traditionally served with bread, mustard and sometimes with potato salad. And you have to try the city’s famous green sauce, which contains seven different herbs. It is usually an accompaniment for hard-boiled eggs. Goethe’s mother is said to have added minced beef to make it extra special. It is also an excellent pairing with asparagus, which mainly grows in southern Hessen. Rhön sheep are recognizable by their pale wool and black faces. One of the oldest sheep breeds, their meat is considered to be particularly tasty.
Food & drink in Hessen.

Apple wine, riesling, and as much mineral water as you like
Eating and drinking keep the body and soul together – that is what they say here. Whether you are intending to celebrate, are looking for a fine wine to accompany a gourmet meal, or simply want to enjoy life for as long as possible, Hessen offers a winning combination of high-quality beverages, from healthy mineral water to apple wine and wine, that will enhance any social occasion. Cheers!

If it’s riesling that you’re after, then it has to be from the Rheingau. The vaulted cellars of the Kloster Eberbach winery provide an authentic atmosphere to sample this fine wine, as do the inns selling home-produced wines where vintner families serve their current vintage along with regional specialties made in their own kitchens.

Another of Hessen’s great passions is its cider, or apple wine. It is best enjoyed in a bembel (an earthenware apple wine pitcher) and mixed with mineral water at one of the typical apple wine bars. In any case, Hessen mineral water is a refreshing alcohol-free treat and is much more than just a health drink.

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More than a kilometer long, the Zeil pedestrian precinct in Frankfurt’s city center is one of the busiest shopping areas in Germany. All the major retail chains have flagship stores along the street between the Hauptwache and Konstablerwache squares.

The pedestrian shopping area in Hessen’s state capital, Wiesbaden, features a string of exclusive boutiques along with friendly cafés and restaurants. Right next door are more bohemian areas in which small shops sell an unusual array of art and antiques. After the stores have closed, this district is transformed as people descend on its fashionable pubs, bars, and clubs.

The MyZeil shopping mall with its distinctive design by leading Italian architect Massimiliano Fuksas is home to many specialist shops and boutiques selling a broad selection of fashion, jewelry, and electronics.

Frankfurt also boasts the Skyline Plaza along with many other shopping malls and outlets in and around the city.
Kassel, Bergpark Wilhelmshöhe

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On the move.
In Hessen.

Map with a wealth of tourist attractions: towns, cities, and cultural events, museums, castles, nature reserves, UNESCO World Heritage sites, and the top palaces, parks, and gardens.

Hessen - there's no way around us.