

Walkable Loops Between Three Countries

A holiday in three different countries surrounded by three languages, three cultures and yet, actually, still in Germany? Three countries so close to each other that it's possible to pass through them all on a flying visit in just twenty minutes? Where is such a place? In western Saarland, where the borders of Germany, France and Luxembourg meet in a triangular arrangement. The fabulous landscape, however, has never paid attention to borders, nor has it ever committed itself to one particular form. As far as the eye can see, hilly woodland alternates with meadows, fields, grassland and pastures, as well as with peaceful river valleys between the countries. At some stage, people also recognised that this interaction was infinite and, in consequence, in precisely this region abolished internal borders. All that still separates Perl in Saarland from Apach in France and Schengen in Luxembourg is the River Moselle. The Agreement signed at Schengen to enable free border traffic breathed life into the spirit of Europe.

And as if this geographical location alone doesn't make people feel good enough, the river that gives this State its name also cuts an impressive caper. Before leaving Saarland in the direction of the River Moselle, the River Saar again shows itself at its very best. It flows in a loop that's so perfectly formed that no-one is able to pass by this spectacular view without stopping. Deep below the „Cloe“ the water gleams amid the woodland green. In the valley, the river meanders alongside all those who prefer to explore the natural spectacle on foot or by bike.



But this isn't the only loop that excites the hearts of hikers. This area justifies Saarland's reputation as a hikers' paradise. It's not only the home of Germany's most beautiful long-distance hiking trail – the Saar-Hunsrück-Steig – but also of more than forty other premium „dream loops“, on which you can become more acquainted with the country and its inhabitants. These also include trails of national acclaim, such as the „Felsenweg“ [Rock Trail] or the „Schluchtenpfad“ [Gorge Path]. It's hardly surprising that others also found this region highly desirable in earlier times. Once the Romans and Celts had surrendered the country, the Prussians and French came. The people here are grateful for their history and have retained a little from every one of the „visitors' cultures.

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A Breath of City Air: Metz, Luxembourg, Trier, Saarbrücken



Sometimes a touch of city flair is just the treat to make you feel good. If cities are what you're looking for, there are four close by – none of which are much more than a half-hour's car drive away from Merzig. Metz, in France, woos visitors with its Cathedral of Saint Etienne and Marc Chagall windows, as well as with its branch of the Parisian „Centre Pompidou“. Luxembourg impresses above all with its location and altitude differences: it's a city where the opposite the poles of historical casemates and the modern finance centre of Kirchberg unite to form a whole. Trier, in the Rhineland-Palatinate, is Germany's oldest city. Those interested in Roman times will be fascinated by the Porta Nigra, the Kaiserthermen and the Amphitheatre. Saarbrücken attracts visitors with the baroque architecture of its Ludwigskirche and Schloss or with its lively centre at St. Johanner Markt. The city starts the cultural year annually with the Max-Opüls Festival, the most renowned festival of German-language films by talented newcomers. A few months later everything focuses on „Perspectives“, the theatre festival presented both in the German and French language.

Hiking: green is the colour, unadulterated the soul



If a colour had to be chosen to best describe the area in words, it would be „green“. If a mood had to be chosen, it would be „unadulterated“. And calm. But that's no wonder, as here, it's impossible to overlook the fact that one third of Saarland's 2,500 square kilometres is covered with mixed forest. But that's not all. Castle ruins stand majestically on the high ridges, crystal-clear brooks bubble in the deeply carved valleys, intricate paths cut through forests and rocks. Amidst these surroundings are small villages and towns whose simple and sincere hospitality is alluring. These assets can all be easily discovered on foot. More than forty premium hiking trails here form a network of paths which is second to none in such a small area. Before it can be accepted in the highest ranks and achieve „Premium“ rating, a hiking trail has to satisfy 34 points, stipulated by meticulous testers. Saarland's „dream loops“ all boast considerably more points. They are between 8 and 18 kilometres long, are extremely well signposted and offer rest stops. The most beautiful thing about them is, though: you'll only meet asphalt when a country road has to be crossed.

A good third of the Saar-Hunsrück-Steig's 180-kilometre long trail – which was only recently awarded the title „Germany's most beautiful long-distance hiking trail“ leads through this area. It's a good companion to the numerous „dream loops“ here. It unobtrusively and repeatedly crosses their paths and leaves scope either to return to the day's starting point, or to tackle the next stage of the trail.



Wining and Dining: what Saarland has to offer

„Home“ is a particularly important word to the people of Saarland. They are loyal to their roots here and hate moving away. That's why there's no other State in Germany with more owner-occupied homes than in Saarland. The solidarity with this State can be felt everywhere and the feelings it creates are converted into delicious foods and drinks. Although the potato didn't reach Europe from South America until the 16th century, it caught on really quickly in this area. The meals that have resulted are unadulterated and tasty. Combined with a dash of French finesse, the cuisine in this area has achieved fame. „Hoorische“ or „Dibbelabbes“ are just two examples of what a solanaceous herb is capable of. In October anyone wishing to try these creations is given the opportunity to do so. At this time, lots of menus in this area are prepared under the motto „Kartoffeltage“.



From the age-old fruit trees growing on the orchard meadows, which gently undulate across the elevated plain, comes the apple. It is served as „Viez“ – the Saarland variant of cider – or is used with other fruits in high-proof „Selbstgebrannte“. Tribute is paid to the fruit at the annual „Viezfest“, when Merzig – the region's municipal centre – buzzes with excitement; otherwise the cider can be experienced on a more leisurely drive along the „cider route“. Game is at home in the forests and therefore also found on many menus, particularly during the „game weeks“. A good wine perfects the enjoyment. Wine is cultivated by two dozen winegrowers in Perl, the only wine-growing area in Saarland. Almost every space there is used for the vines. In the village of Sehndorf, the vines extend right up to the houses. And as if that weren't enough regional delicacies, there are also three private breweries in the region. „Saarfürst“, „Hochwälder“ and „Abtei Bräu“ are the names of the cloudy types of beer that ensure no-one is left thirsty.

Water Variations: navigable and salutary

Quietly flowing rivers have something calming about them. You won't find adventure or turbulently gushing rapids anywhere on the Moselle or the Saar. That's why they are so easy to navigate by boat. While on board, you're able to acquire a fantastic view of the idyllic wine-producing villages along the River Moselle as you pass by. The River Saar offers not only fantastic landscapes, but also a difficult challenge for captains – one which certainly guarantees excitement. The manoeuvre necessary to navigate boats around the 300-degree loop near Mettlach has always inspired skippers to say a quick prayer to their patron saints. It has always worked well and no one has ever been disappointed. But the river is not the only source of water worthy of mention here. Water gushing from the ground near to Merzig is recognised as salutary and good for your health. The Bietzener Heilquelle is located 160 metres below the ground as it reaches the surface, extends a tempting invitation to „take the waters“. This drink is free of charge.



Cycling: flat or with gradients, but always a pleasure

It's exhilarating to feel the wind in your face, fix your eyes on the horizon and feel at one with your bike. The only question which then needs to be answered is what gives you the greatest pleasure? Cycling on mostly flat stretches or working up a sweat on steeper gradients? Saarland certainly doesn't offer the characteristics of alpine cycling, but instead has found a form of cycling to satisfy both levels of difficulty. It follows the „cycling for pleasure“ theme. The cycle-trail network offers good, multilingual signposting which sharpens the senses, making cyclists more aware of the many places of beauty along the trail and inspiring their awareness of the region. Those who prefer staying on the flat choose the stretches along the Rivers Moselle and Saar. The „Saar Radweg“ and the River Saar are inseparable, staying side by side without deviation until the Saar flows into the River Moselle near Konz. Every year in May the „Saar-Pedal“ event is held in recognition of this path's particular attraction. During this time, the road between Merzig and Konz is closed to vehicles and the varied programme of activities along the route makes sure no-one gets bored. The return journey could take place on the „Mosel-Radweg“ which leads alongside wine-producing villages in Luxembourg. There's no limit to the range of possible combinations. And when these paths are exhausted, experienced cyclists can still have a go at tackling the 354-kilometres and gradient stages of the „Saarland-Radweg“ around Saarland, or the „Saar-Bostalsee-Radweg“, whose unspoilt villages and idyllic scenery in particular are a prime talking point.



Culture: „Opera in the Marquee“, „Classic on the Lake“ or „Pop Open-Air“

Those thirsty for culture certainly won't miss out here. The people of Saarland don't only know how to celebrate, they also do it. Numerous village festivals are complemented by performances from the high culture genre. The „Zeltpalast“ in Merzig's harbour area is the only marquee complex in Germany in which operas are performed. „Aida“, „Tosca“ and „Rigoletto“ sound absolutely beautiful in the ambience of the marquee, which was made to specifications in Italy and accommodates an audience of 1,500 persons. Classic formations from all over Europe are also attracted to the annual „Kammermusiktag“, in Mettlach, held around the „Alter Turm“ – Saarland's oldest sacred building – and in the rooms of the Benedictine Abbey.



In summer, it's normal to see swimmers and avid sunbathers scattered over the meadow around the lake, but once a year these same meadows are dominated by fans of classical music. On this occasion the lake in Losheim provides the backdrop for the „Klassik am See“ event which, in addition to offering an explosive musical programme, ends late in the evening with a display of real fireworks. This event attracts international stars that turn this one-day auditory delight into an exceptional „Open-Air Experience“. Rock and pop fans can also indulge in their music taste „open air“ when „Rock am See“ extends its invitation to much heavier sounds, or to an international band for pop music.

Gardens Without Limits: farm garden or baroque park?



The roughly twenty „Gardens Without Limits“ form a network which gives new life to the history and culture of gardens. As the name suggests, these gardens are distributed beyond national borders and their styles, ranging from farm gardens to baroque parks, leave nothing to be desired. The last addition to this network for the time being is the 50,000-square-metre „Four Seasons Park“ in the hiking community of Losheim am See. Here too, the name says it all as a visit to the location, which affords a view over the outer slopes of the swimming lake, is worthwhile whatever the season. Douglas-fir terraces, trees, shrubs and herbaceous perennials reflect the changes in flora during the course of the seasons. This delightful view can be seen particularly well from the bistro's large glazed façade.



In the Meadow Flower Garden around the La Grange Castle in Manom, Lorraine, a contemporary appreciation and understanding of gardens contrasts with castle grounds dating back to the 18th century. The „Garden of Native Flora“ in Szy-Chazelles, near Metz, provides ideas for one's own garden. Here, plant growers present forgotten plant species on parts of the estate of Robert Schumann, who has gone down in history as the „Father of Europe“. Other destinations where gardens can be enjoyed without the restriction of borders are the „Senses Garden“, the „Garden of Taste“ and the „Garden of Arts“.

In contrast, „Steine an der Grenze“ offers a chance to experience art carried out directly on the border. It shows the results of a sculptor symposium where 28 international artists used sculptures to make a creative feature of the line which marks the border between France and Germany.



Places of Interest: a focus on ceramics and Roman settlements

No-one can ignore this location. Sublime and imposing, this mighty building stands majestically on the banks of the River Saar, almost as if it were keeping a keen eye on the calmly flowing river as it passes. In earlier times, prayer and monastic life took place behind the dark-red baroque façade. Today, the former Benedictine abbey houses the Head Office of the Villeroy & Boch ceramics enterprise. In 1809 Jean François Boch-Buschmann purchased the empty building, which shortly before had been plundered by the French revolution troops, and set up a factory there. From this time onwards, mosaics, tiles, tableware and complete sets of bathroom furnishings have commenced their triumphal course around the world. Tsars, celebrities, sheiks and even Popes are happy to be seen with these products. The 224 pieces of tableware from which Pope Benedikt XVI dined were manufactured here. With its „Keravision“, „Keramikumuseum“ and the „world's most beautiful museum café“ in keeping with the style of the Dairy Shop in Dresden, a visit to the company in Mettlach, Saarland – not far from the „Saarschleife“ – is a journey to the world of ceramic aesthetics. It's no longer possible today to say exactly how many, where and in which form V&B mosaics adorn floors throughout the world. What we can say, however, is the number of pieces used in the largest Roman mosaic north of the Alps. In Roman times, a rich Roman adorned his villa in Perl-Nennig with three million mosaic tiles. Circus and amphitheatre scenes bring back to life the atmosphere of „Bread and Games“. When a farmer came across these witnesses to a bygone culture while carrying out excavation work, he couldn't possibly guess that he had just discovered the largest continuous mosaic north of the Alps. Just a few kilometres away, in Perl-Borg, the reconstruction of a Roman villa on historical foundations shows how those who could afford such accommodation used to live: strolling in the gardens, being pampered with fine food by slaves, or bathing – just like they used to do in Ancient Rome.



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Discovery Map
3-countries
3-countries holiday region

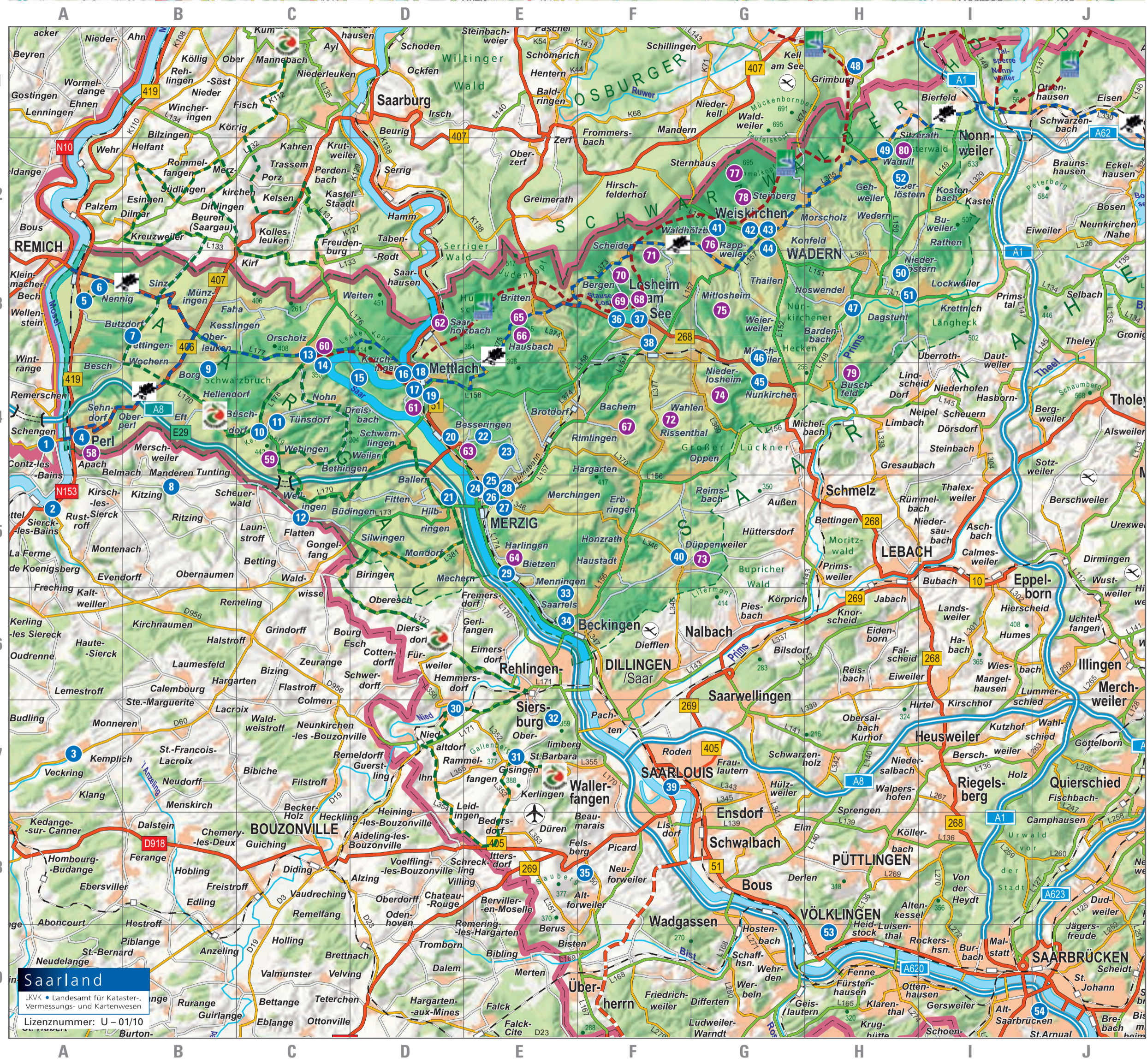
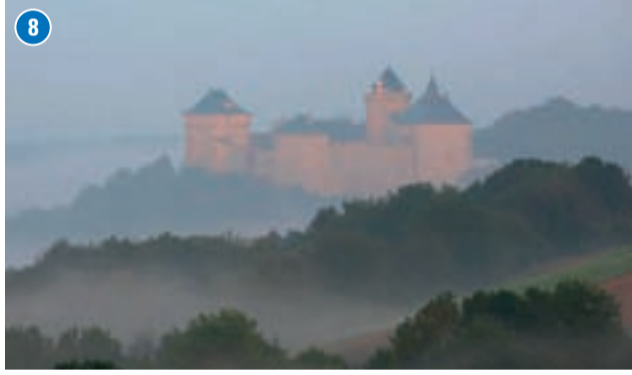
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The most beautiful excursions

- 1 Schengen Baroque and Herb Garden A 4
- 2 Sierck-les-Bains Fortress A 5
- 3 Fort Hackenberg Veckring (Maginot Linie) A 7
- 4 Perl Baroque Gardens A 4
- 5 Roman Mosaic, Nennig A 3
- 6 Berg Castle with Renaissance Gardens, Nennig A 3
- 7 The Saarland Distillery Museum, Tettingen-Butzdorf B 3
- 8 Château de Malbrouck, Manderen B 5
- 9 Perl-Borg Roman Villa with Gardens B 4
- 10 Historical Blacksmiths, Tünsdorf C 4
- 11 Tünsdorf Farm Garden C 4
- 12 Sculptor symposium: „Stones on the Border“ C 5
- 13 Cloef-Atrium, Orscholz C 3
- 14 Cloef/Saarschleife Vantage Point, Orscholz C 4
- 15 Montclair Castle, Mettlach D 4
- 16 Mettlach & Saarburg Excursion Boats D 4
- 17 Villeroy & Boch Discovery Museum, Mettlach D 4
- 18 Living Planet Square with „Earth Spirit“, Mettlach D 4
- 19 Church of St. Lutwinus (wall mosaics), Mettlach D 4
- 20 „B-(Panzer-) Werk“ („Siegfried Line“ bunker), Besseringen D 4
- 21 „THE BATHS“ (swimming/wellness), Merzig D 5
- 22 Werner Freund's Wolf Park, Merzig E 4
- 23 Senses Garden, Merzig E 4
- 24 Municipal Park with Saline, Merzig E 5
- 25 Werner Freund Expedition Museum, Merzig E 5
- 26 Fellenberg-Mill Museum of Precision Engineering, Merzig E 5
- 27 St. Peter's Parish Church and Gardens, Merzig E 5
- 28 Fellenberg Castle Museum with Garden of Arts, Merzig E 5
- 29 Bietzen Spa Spring E 5
- 30 Hemmersdorf Museum of Local History D 7
- 31 Saargau House with Farm Garden, Gisingen E 7
- 32 Castle ruin Siersburg E 7
- 33 Wolferskopf Nature Reserve, Beckingen E 6
- 34 Saargarten, Beckingen E 6
- 35 Castle ruin Teufelsburg, Felsberg F 8
- 36 Losheim Reservoir Leisure Centre F 3
- 37 Four Seasons Park, Losheim F 3
- 38 Adventure Railway Station/Museum Railway, Losheim F 3
- 39 Fortified Town of Saarlouis (Vauban) F 7
- 40 Düppenweiler Historical Copper Mine F 5
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- 42 Museum of Mechanical Music, Weiskirchen G 2
- 43 Weiskirchen Perennials Garden G 2
- 44 „Vitalis“ Weiskirchen (swimming/wellness) G 2
- 45 Weiherhof Golf Course, Nunkirchen G 4
- 46 Münchweiler Castle G 3
- 47 Noswendel Lake Leisure Centre H 3
- 48 Castle ruin Grimburg, Kell am See H 1
- 49 Hochwald Alpine Pasture, Wadrill H 2
- 50 Dagstuhl Castle Ruin H 3
- 51 Dagstuhl Castle with Castle Gardens H 3
- 52 Gallo-Roman Monumental Tumulus, Oberlöstern H 2
- 53 Völklingen Ironworks - World Cultural Heritage Site H 9
- 54 Ludwig's Church, Saarbrücken (baroque) J 9
- 55 Cathedral of Saint Étienne by night, Metz
- 56 Porta Nigra, Trier
- 57 Bock Casemates, Luxembourg

Traumscleifen Saar-Hunsrück

	Length	Points	
58	Panoramaweg, Perl	8,3 km	62 A 4
59	Wehinger Viezpfad, Wehingen	14 km	55 C 4
60	Cloef-Pfad, Orscholz	7,3 km	78 C 3
61	Saarschleife-Tafeltour, Mettlach	16,2 km	68 D 4
62	Saarlöcherpfad, Saarlöcher	12 km	57 D 3
63	Wolfsweg, Merzig	9,4 km	49 E 4
64	Bietzenberger, Honzrath	17,5 km	65 E 5
65	Steinhauerweg, Britten	10,5 km	68 E 3
66	Waldsaumweg, Hausbach	9,9 km	56 E 3
67	Oppig-Grät-Weg, Rimplingen	10,5 km	72 F 4
68	Stausee-Tafeltour, Losheim am See	9,9 km	64 F 3
69	Stausee-Mintour, Losheim am See	3 km	83 F 3
70	Der Bergener, Bergen	11,5 km	71 F 3
71	Felsenweg, Scheiden	13,6 km	83 F 3
72	Schluchtenpfad, Rissenthal	10,5 km	73 F 4
73	Litermont Sagenweg, Düppenweiler	17,5 km	58 G 5
74	Lücknerweg, Wahlen	16,4 km	54 G 4
75	Georgi-Panoramaweg, Mittosheim	13,5 km	63 G 3
76	Zwei-Täler-Weg, Waldhölzbach	13 km	59 G 2
77	Weiskircher Höhen-Tour, Weiskirchen	18,5 km	52 G 2
78	Hochwald-Pfad, Weiskirchen	12 km	62 G 2
79	Weg des Wassers, Büschfeld	13 km	55 H 4
80	Wadrilltal-Tafeltour, Sitzerath	17 km	52 H 2

Premium Long-Distance Hiking Trail

Saar-Hunsrück-Steig
Length 180 km

Tourist Roads

Eichenlaubstraße
Length 80 km

Viezstraße
Length 150 km

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