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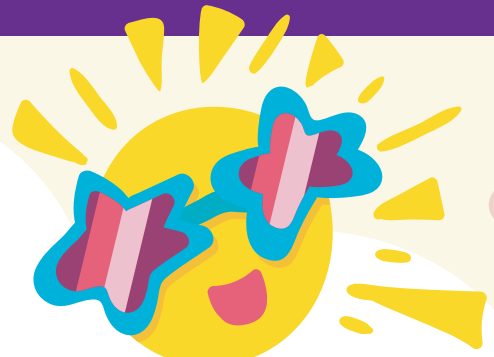
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A Stars and Stripes Community Publication

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PLAN AHEAD

By Katie Wells



BAVARIA

Tollwood Summer Festival,
Munich

JUNE 19–JULY 20, 2025

This concert series event will keep you entertained for an entire month this summer. Held at **Olympiapark Süd**, there will be a vibrant “Market of Ideas” where you can listen to plenty of live music from all over the world and enjoy theater and performance groups. You can shop the market for handmade crafts and enjoy a variety of international food stands. Entrance to the Market of Ideas festival grounds which includes music, theater, children’s entertainment and environmental activities does not require a ticket. However, to see the main performers at the music arena, you will need to purchase a ticket. Check the website to see a list of performers and purchase your tickets in advance, tollwood.de.

KAISERSLAUTERN

Nibelungen Festival,
Worms

JULY 11–27, 2025

In mid-July the stage is set against the backdrop of the illuminated Imperial Cathedral in Worms. This open-air festival tells the famous story of Siegfried the Dragon Slayer. For 2025, the play for the festival is being written by Roland Schimmerlpfennig, an award-winning German-language playwright. While the play is in the German language, renowned actors take up the roles and it’s a big spectacle. Non-German-speaking visitors will also be enamored by the visuals and epic adventure. While there, you can also enjoy dinner in the park, the **Worms Nibelungen Museum** or simply strolling through the city and spotting dragons and statues of Siegfried.

STUTTART

Hamburger Fischmarkt,
Stuttgart

JULY 10–20, 2025

Since 1987, the traveling Hamburg Fish Market has made Stuttgart an important stop. Ships glide in carrying plenty of fresh seafood from northern Germany and the **Karlsplatz** in downtown Stuttgart is transformed into a lively fish market and festival for 10 days. A bell ringing at the baking fish tower announces the start of the event. A variety of food stalls offer delicious fish dishes like fish rolls, pickled herring, smoked eels, **Labskaus** (a ‘legendary’ dish with potatoes, beef and beets), and even, maritime-themed cocktails. You can purchase products to take home like smoked salmon, tins of fish and other seafood products. If you tire of fish, there are plenty of specialty desserts and sweets to try brought in from the north, along with traditional festival food. Entrance to the market is free and there is plenty of seating and music to listen to while enjoying the fresh catch.

WIESBADEN

Johannisnacht Festival,
Mainz

JUNE 20–23, 2025

Less than a half-hour drive from Wiesbaden, St. John’s Night is one of Mainz’s largest festivals. The festival celebrates the memory of Johannes Gutenberg, inventor of the Gutenberg printing press. There will be an antiquarian book market on Schillerplatz and Ballplatz. An artists’ market starts from the Kurfürstenbrunnen to Fischtorplatz with arts and crafts stalls filled with handmade items. In front of the **Gutenberg Museum**, guests can create their own colorful works of art. Giant bubbles float through streets as street artists appear and perform with puppets, bagpipes, on stilts and more. In traditional festival fashion, there will be rides, food and drink stands as well as a Ferris wheel. The festival concludes on Monday evening with a fireworks display over the Rhine River. ■

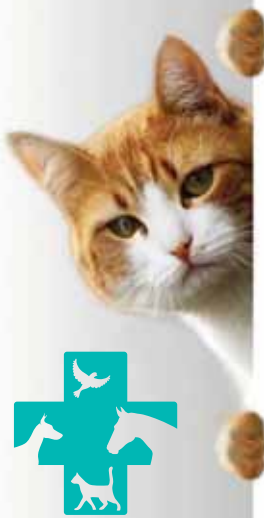
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SPOT
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The First Bikes



By Kat Nickola

Germany is home to many great inventions like clarinets, diesel engines and the moveable-type printing press, but did you know that it is also the homeland of bicycles?

The first “Laufmaschinen” (running machines) were invented in 1817 by Baron Karl von Drais who worked for the Duke of the Grand Duchy of Baden. Using his last name outside of Germany, the bike became known as the “Draisine.” It is theorized that Drais was creating a new vehicle because horse mortality had been high the previous year. Known as the “Year Without a

Summer,” in 1816, Europe experienced a volcanic winter due to the massive eruption of Mount Tambora in 1815.

The Laufmaschine took its first ride of 13 kilometers in **Mannheim**. Drais traveled from the house where it was built, along the famous “Chausee” road between Mannheim Castle and Schwetzingen Castle, and onto one of the many “Relais” used by the German postal system as stations for boarding fresh horses.

Drais’s original Laufmaschine is located at the City Museum inside the Prinz-Max-Palais in Karlsruhe for all to go see. ■

Scan here to learn about cycling with the spring bulbs in the Netherlands.



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BAVARIAN BIKE TRAILS THROUGH THE ALLGÄU ALPS

By Katie Wells

BAVARIA, with its many hilly forests, extensive mountain range and large lakes is a wonderful place to bike. Below are three trails ranging from easy to difficult that feature the Allgäu Alps.

A quick search on [alltrails.com](https://www.alltrails.com) will show you a map of each route.

CASTLE RUINS EISENBERG AND HOHENFREYBURG

Level: Easy

Distance: 4.5 km out and back

Elevation gain: 173m

Time to complete: Approximately 1.24 hours

Best months to ride: Year-round

This is a great route for beginner cyclists, and you don't need an expensive bike to complete it. You can even take the whole family to view the castle ruins as this is an easy half-day ride. And if you get tired of cycling, it's quite walkable. While it's always good to pack water and snacks, there are refreshments at the **Schlossbergalm**. The twin ruins of the medieval castles are fascinating on their own, but also offer great views of the snow-capped Allgäu Alps. Dogs can tag along as well!

Highlights

- Family-friendly
- Ruins of Eisenberg Castle
- Ruins of Hohenfreyberg Castle
- Panoramic views of Pfrontener Valley and the Allgäu Alps

FORGGENSEE AND BANWALDSEE

Level: Moderately Challenging

Distance: 33.5 km loop

Elevation gain: 582m

Time to complete: 7h 55 mins

Best months to ride: March-Oct.

This bike trail features Germany's fifth-largest lake, Forggensee just north of Füssen. You can complete the trail in a day or make stops along the way and take it at a leisurely pace. The route has many campsites. However, if that's not your style, it takes you through the picturesque towns of **Roßhaupten** and **Rieden am Forggensee**. Both offer refreshment stops where you can try regional specialties and they have overnight accommodations. At Rieden am Forggensee, you can enjoy bathing areas and the Roman rest area, "**Mansio Via Claudia Augusta**" along the ancient Roman road built nearly 2,000 years ago. Another option is to hop on and off boats with your bike to see more of the area. There are eight stops along the route through the Forggensee boat service.

Highlights

- Forggensee
- Rieden am Forggensee
- Bannwaldsee
- Views over the Allgäu Alps

DIENERSBERG ZUR SPEICHERHÜTTE

Level: Hard

Distance: 32.8 km round-trip

Elevation gain: 978m

Time to complete: Approximately 3.5- 4 hours

Best months to ride: April-Oct.

A beautiful yet difficult trail, this route requires riders who are well-trained and who have a good mountain bike. With a steep incline and constant ascent, it leads through the southwestern part of the Allgäu High Alps nature reserve. Along the way are charming water features like the **Rappenalpenbach**. Look for grazing cows, colorful wildflowers and wildlife when passing through the **Valley of Stillach**. When you need a rest or get hungry, there are plenty of **Speicherhütte** (storage huts) along the trail where you can admire the views or get a refreshment through donation. **Sennalpe Eschbach** is a dairy farm stop that serves freshly made cheese products, hearty snacks and made-daily cottage cakes.

Highlights

- Views over the Allgäu Alps
- Valley of the Stillach
- Rappenalpenbach
- Sennalpe Eschbach
- Speicherhütte ■

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We easily walked onto the regional train with loaded bikes, backpacks and our dog. My kids spotted the bike logo on the side of the correct train car as it pulled into the **Kaiserslautern Hauptbahnhof** and we walked down the platform to meet it.

About an hour later, we rolled off at the Bingen Hauptbahnhof and walked the overpass to the Rhein River. For a couple of days we pedaled northward on the flat, paved Rhine Cycle Route, taking in the views of barges and vineyards. We pedaled through scenic half-timbered towns, stopped for pommes (French fries) and beer during breaks and fought a nasty headwind.

In Boppard, we stopped for an overnight in a hotel, enjoying a wander around the Roman ruins before hot showers and dinner. Our 62km ride ended the next day in Koblenz where we again rolled our bikes onto a train home.

Europe's extensive radweg (bike way) trail system is unparalleled elsewhere in the world. I highly recommend taking advantage of it via bike while you are stationed in Germany.

The Joy of Biking

in Germany By Kat Nickola

Do I need a ticket to take my bike on the train?

On **high-speed trains** like the ICE, IC or EC you always need to reserve a ticket ahead of time.

On **local and regional trains** like an S, RE or RB, the answer is: maybe. Because the Deutsche Bahn is a network of local associations, each state has unique rules about bike ticketing. If you are transiting between German states, you'll need to buy a 6.50 Euro ticket for your bike. If you stay inside a state, it may be free. **Scan the QR code for details on regional rail travel in each state.**





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River Trails

Some of the easiest trails follow river and canal courses.

These mostly flat routes are perfect for beginners and families, in addition to being great 'connectors' to the wider trail networks.

My family has cycled along the Rhine River and the Mosel River. Our preference is for the Mosel cycle route: it is less touristed than the Rhine route and just as scenic. Plus, the Mosel has way more campgrounds right along the river with easy drop-in availability for cyclists using tents. While the campgrounds primarily advertise to RVs on their websites, all are happy to find some space in the field for cyclists in a tent overnight.

For those stationed in Bavaria, the Danube River and its tributaries have some of the most scenic cycle routes along their banks.



Euro Velo Routes

There are currently 17 official EuroVelo long-distance cycling routes that crisscross Europe.

This international network of routes connects paved, hard-packed dirt and, occasionally, road-side bike lanes. There are plenty of resources for cyclists along the routes, so you can easily find hotels, campgrounds, restaurants, bike repair shops and other necessities along the way.

Germany has the most EuroVelo (EV) routes crossing its borders, so it's possible for you to bike all the way from your home to the furthest reaches of the continent via bike! Here are some EV options near you.



EV 4 – Central Europe Route.

Passing through **Wiesbaden**, this route crosses the continent's varied geography from east to west.



EV 5 – Via Romea Francigena.

Following a thousand-year-old pilgrimage route from Canterbury to Rome, this EV dips into Germany about an hour from the **KMC** at Saarbrücken.



EV 6 – Atlantic to Black Sea Route.

Access south of **Ansbach** gives you the chance to traverse the continent from east to west along some beautiful rivers.



EV13 – Iron Curtain Trail.

With segments within roughly an hour of those stationed at **Vilseck** or **Grafenwöhr**, this is the longest EV at 10,550 kilometers, traversing from the Arctic to the Black Sea.



EV 15 – Rhine Cycle Route.

Passing within an hour of the **KMC** and **Stuttgart** and going directly through Wiesbaden, this route follows the famous river from its source in Switzerland to its mouth on the coast of the Netherlands.



Mountain Biking

In the forests near you, mountain biking on the dirt trails may be permitted.

Each state has different laws regarding biking in the forests.

In the **Rhineland-Pfalz** (KMC, Baumholder, Ramstein) mountain biking is permitted on forest trails. You must yield to pedestrians. The Pfälzerwald (Palatinate Forest) is one of Germany's largest, and least restrictive places to mountain bike.

In **Hessen** (Wiesbaden) mountain biking in the forest is only permitted on designated single-track mountain bike trails or dirt roads.

In **Bavaria** (Vilseck, Grafenwöhr, Ansbach) cycling of any kind is only allowed on paved roads, cycle paths and or designated dirt roads in the forest, not on single-track trails. For this reason, mountain bike parks are popular in Bavaria.

In **Baden-Württemberg** (Stuttgart) you can only bike on trails wider than two meters, so you can't mountain bike on single-track forest trails.

As I finish writing, my husband pulls up to our house from a long mountain bike ride. We are lucky to live adjacent to the Pfälzerwald where he goes for daily rides all year long. And, like almost everyone living in Germany, we are not far from an amazing set of signed bike trails that are perfect for a casual afternoon ride on our comfort bikes for ice cream in the next town over.

Take advantage of your own local bike trails and consider how they connect to the wider world. Who knows, maybe you'll just keep pedaling across the continent. ■



Staying Local

You don't need to go far to enjoy biking in Germany.

A daily ride or nice weekend outing is also a great way to spend time outdoors and take advantage of the amazing trail system.

GPS route planners like Komoot or Outdoor Active can be useful, but simply hopping on your bike and heading to your nearest trail is also really fun. You can realistically choose a nearby destination and simply follow trail signs there and back without pre-planning or requiring a device for turn-by-turn navigation.

Throughout Germany, trails connect villages, follow rivers and traverse farm fields. When reading a trail sign, the bike logo indicates that bicycles (of any kind) are permitted on the trail. These routes may be paved or hard packed with dirt and stone. When necessary, they may share roads with cars for short periods. Numbers beside town names indicate the distance in kilometers via the trail.

Note that many times when a trail enters a town it will join back up with the local roads, so you may feel like it dumped you out onto a busy street. In this case, look around for the signs with bike logos; arrows will help lead you along the safest route through the village and back onto a trail.

« Who knows,
maybe you'll just
keep pedaling across
the continent. »



RESOURCES FOR *Long-Distance Bicycling*

With well-developed cycling infrastructure, conscientious drivers and an active biking culture, Europe is an ideal place for long-distance bicycling. No matter where you are stationed, there are opportunities to either ride from your house, drive to a trailhead or travel via train with your bicycle to do some excellent riding.

Finding Trails

In the Kaiserslautern area, there is the perfect mix of both on and off-road trail systems. If you are interested in paved bike paths check out the **RLP Gold app** or visit their bike touring planner via the web at www.tourenplaner-rheinland-pfalz.de/en. This resource allows you to filter your search for activity, distance and difficulty. Once you find the tour you want to ride, you can download GPX files to use in your cycling computer or your favorite mapping or tracking app on your smartphone.

If off-road cycling and mountain biking are more your speed, the **Mountain Bike Park Pfälzerwald** website www.mountainbikepark-pfaelzerwald.de will give you all the information you need to plan some long-distance tours through the forests to the south of the KMC area.

I have also enjoyed the opportunity to explore further afield. The **Mosel** and **Rhine River** bike paths are some of the best long-distance paved bike routes I've ridden with my family. Camping and bicycle-friendly accommodations are plentiful along the way.

Bikepacking in Europe

Most paths and trails in Europe offer the ability to do multi-day rides by staying in campsites or bike-friendly hotels on the route. This is known as "bikepacking." One of the easiest websites to navigate for planning your overnight stays is the **Bett and Bike** website, www.bettundbike.de. It is managed by the Allgemeiner Deutscher Fahrrad-Club (ADFC), which is similar to ADAC but for bicycles. If you are on a shoestring budget, you can also check out www.warmshowers.org, a bicycle touring-specific website that is akin to couch surfing.

In addition to the paved paths, there is an amazing assortment of off-road bikepacking routes throughout Europe. I have had the opportunity to ride sections of the **European Divide Trail**, a trans-Alps trip from Garmisch to Lake Garda, and a large loop through **Slovenia**. If you are looking for some inspiration or pre-made routes, check out bikepacking.com/bikepacking-routes, or search bikepacking on www.komoot.com.

Long-Distance Cycling Gear

There are a multitude of gear and bicycle choices for either the paved or offroad paths. Choosing the right equipment really comes down to the type of terrain you expect to ride and your budget.

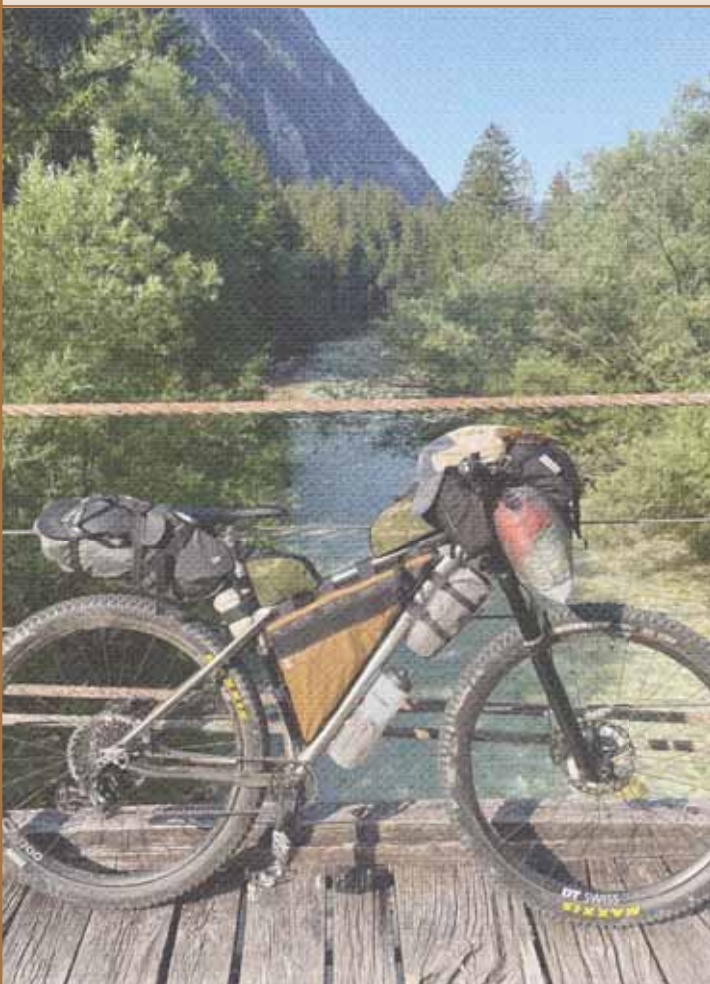
If you are new to cycling and have access to DOD resources, I recommend renting a bicycle from MWR's Outdoor Rec. Off-installation, you can go to one of the many outfitters along the Mosel or Rhine. It is an inexpensive way to see if you enjoy riding.

If you decide cycling is for you, your local bicycle shop is the best place to get fit for a bicycle. It may be a bit more expensive than buying a bike at the Exchange or from Amazon, but there is a better chance that you will purchase a bicycle you enjoy riding.

If you are already a seasoned cyclist and would like to learn more about specific bicycles or gear, I recommend the following websites:

bikepacking.com | theradavist.com | www.cyclingabout.com

Enjoy your trip down the bicycle touring and bikepacking rabbit hole! ■



A word of caution: Be prepared to detour on your own. On just about every trip I've done using a crowdsourced pre-made loop, there have been trails that were closed due to forest work, sections that were overgrown, or paths covered in downed trees. It may be better to follow local cycle trail signs when the route from an app feels off course.



PHOTO BY

Ana Marquis Photography



Known for its scenic canals and distinctive embellished architecture, **Venice, Italy** is a photographic treat. ■



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