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A bronze statue of Mars Ultor, a Roman deity, standing and holding a spear aloft in his right hand and a shield in his left. He is wearing a helmet with a large plume and a cuirass. The background is a dark blue with a faint, repeating pattern of Roman soldiers in battle.

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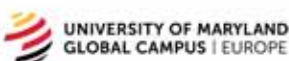


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PLAN AHEAD

By Katie Wells



BAVARIA

Eschenbach Annual Ghost Walk | Oct. 25, 2026

Eschenbach turns into an eerie ghost town the weekend before Halloween. The walk, from 5–8 p.m., is for all ages and leads visitors down dark alleys full of goosebumps and spooky stories. Stations are set up for trick-or-treating and there will be market stalls with themed food and drinks like spider-sekt and witch's bread. Beware of actors dressed in costumes designed to give you a fright! The event has free admission and costumes are encouraged. [Volksfest-grafenwoer.de](https://volksfest-grafenwoer.de)



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KAISERSLAUTERN

Gartenschau Kaiserslautern Pumpkin Exhibition | Sept. 1 – Oct. 31, 2026

This year, the Pumpkin Exhibition will have the theme of "Dinosaurs." There will be over 450,000 pumpkins of various kinds and colors to create unique works of sculpture art. Previous themes include "Underwater" and "Fire." This is a fun, easy family outing and you can buy tickets once there or online. The **Open-Rhineland-Palatinate Pumpkin Weighing Championships** allows pumpkin farmers and amateur gardeners to compete for the title of the "Heaviest Pumpkin" or the "Most Beautiful." [Gartenschau-kl.de](https://gartenschau-kl.de)



SPANGDAHLEM

Trierer Unterwelten | Oct. 29 – Nov. 21, 2026

Considered Germany's oldest city, Trier was founded by Romans in the late 1st century B.C. As "spooky season" draws near, go underground for an eerie festival that resides in catacombs, cellars, crypts, tunnels and more strange spaces. The **Trier Underworlds Festival** spans over three weeks and has guided tours, live musical performances, theatre productions, art on display and cinema. As you move through the festival, you will learn about history, myths and legends that include Germany's oldest wine cellar, the Episcopal wineries and the Imperial baths. Purchase tickets in advanced at trierer-unterwelten.de.



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STUTTGART

Fellbacher Herbst | Oct. 9 – 12, 2026

Give thanks for the wine harvest at the **Fellbach Thanksgiving and Wine Festival**, which is now the second-largest harvest festival in the Stuttgart region. Visitors can enjoy fine wines of the Kappelberg region, regional cuisine and live music. An extensive program includes the Sepp Herberger Memorial Cup Tournament (a non-official soccer tournament that honors Sepp Herberger's legacy coaching the West German team to victory at the 1954 World Cup), a lantern parade, musical fireworks display and plenty of thrilling rides. The city center will be car-free on Sunday, so you may want to plan accordingly. [Herbst.fellbach.de](https://herbst.fellbach.de)



WIESBADEN

Halloween Frankenstein at Burg Königstein | Oct. 16 – Nov. 1, 2026

Head to "The Kingdom of Darkness," where zombies, werewolves, vampires and other ghoulish creatures gather at the Burg Königstein castle ruins to turn your nightmares into reality. For those with kids 6 years and up, fear not, Sundays are Children's Day from 2 – 6 p.m. and feature spooks instead of scares. A standard ticket includes access to all areas of the castle, parking and bus transfers to and from the castle. There are other VIP packages which include meet and greets with monsters and a four-course meal. [Frankentein-halloween.de](https://frankentein-halloween.de) ■



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Roman Holy Relics in Germany



By Kat Nickola

One vestige of the Roman time period that left its mark in Germany long after occupation was the display of saintly relics. To understand, we must go back to the early common era, and remember that the Roman Empire was not a fan of Christian worshippers until the reign of Constantine in the 4th century A.D. Before that, Christians in Rome would meet and bury their dead in secret catacombs.

In the 1500s, these ancient catacombs were excavated and some of the skeletal remains were assumed to be those of martyrs. In order to support the Catholic monasteries in northern Europe, some of the holy skeletons were sent to Germany, Austria and Switzerland. They replaced older relics that had been destroyed by Protestant reformers and were adorned with fancy clothes and jewels before being laid out on display in cathedrals and chapels.

This new glitzy way of honoring the holy dead continued afterward, mostly in Catholic Bavaria, with some abbeyes and monasteries placing local holy skeletons on bedazzled display. ■

A FEW SPOTS in southern Germany to pay your respects to these holy skeletal remains:

Fürstenfeld Abbey, Fürstenfeldbruck
Ottobeuren Abbey, Ottobeuren
Rott Abbey, Rott am Inn
St. Martin Church, Aulendorf
St. Peter's Kirche, München
Waldsassen Abbey, Waldsassen



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MAKING WINE WITH THE ROMANS IN POMMERN

By Tamala Malerk

In my four years living in Germany, the quaint wine village of Pommern did not hit my radar until recently when I attended Pommern's annual Roman and Celtic Festival where thousands of years of the city's history came to life at the Martberg temple complex.

HISTORY OF POMMERN

Celtic-speaking people settled in the city over 2,000 years ago as a local tribe known to the Romans as "Treveri," and the Martberg Gallo-Roman temple complex was a central place of importance for their tribe, according to archeological evidence found at the site.

When the Romans came to the area, they grew tropical fruit and cultivated wine, establishing Pommern as one of the "oldest wine villages on the Mosel." This was also the inspiration for the village's name. The name Pommern comes from the Latin word "pomum" meaning "fruit." It is also closely tied to the Roman goddess, Pomona.

Today, Pommern is home to about 500 people.

THE ANNUAL CELTIC AND ROMAN FEST AT THE MARTBERG

Every year, during the first weekend of May, the Martberg hosts this small Roman and Celtic-themed market that is worth checking out if you love history as well as local cuisine and wine.

You can get to the market in a variety of ways. For fitness enthusiasts, or a barely in-shape writer who thought "surely this cannot be uphill the entire way," you can park at the *Park-platz* along the Mosel River. Then, a walk along the wine vineyards and through the forested path (uphill) will take about 35 minutes. To shorten the time, you can also bike this path.

This is a gorgeous option; however, even on a cool, spring day, I was sweating. You can also drive right up to the festival where there are parking options. No matter how you get there, note that the roads are tiny and winding.

Once at the festival, you will find reenactors in their camps. The Romans have one camp; the Celts have another. On the day we attended, there was a great blend of reenactments and rest time to check out everything onsite.

Our first stop was the food area where someone was grilling large brats and a giant vat of Roman soup kept hot over a fire. I can highly recommend both. My spouse even went back for a second brat before we left later that day. While eating, we watched the actors in their respective camps: a Celtic man allowing a child to try on chainmail and a Roman legionary getting chastised by the centurion. Then, over the loudspeaker, a German voice announced that a reenactment would occur in a few minutes.

The small crowd made our way to see where the reenactment of a post-victory ceremony occurred in Latin with German commentary. Speaking neither German nor Latin, I still got the gist of what was happening. After the ceremony, we enjoyed some coffee and cake. Finally, we were corralled into a larger field area to watch Roman legionaries train for battle for roughly half an hour before we headed back into town.

If you cannot make it to the annual festival, the Martberg temple complex is open to visitors from April to October, and you can see many of the ancient artifacts unearthed there at the nearby Stiftsmuseum of Treis-Karden. To learn more, visit martberg-pommern.de.



PHOTO BY TAMALA MALERK

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Cutting off Roman Germania

By Kat Nickola

It was a covert mission by a treacherous mastermind that finally halted the Roman incursions into what is now Germany. For the Germanic people, he was considered a hero. To the Romans, he was a traitor.

Arminius (Hermann in German) was a member of the Cheruscan chieftom in a time when Germany was comprised of many diverse people groups. But his area had become a frontier territory of Rome who had some cooperative vassals like Arminius' people. He learned Latin and served abroad in the Roman army to earn a Roman citizenship. He was enmeshed. Whether or not he was playing the long game from the start, we will never know.

In September of the year 8 A.D., Arminius was stationed near his home territory on the Germania frontier where he was a trusted leader, or prefect, of a cohort of roughly 450 fellow Cherusci warriors serving as soldiers for Rome. The region was governed by a Roman named Varus who controlled three legions. There had been 10 legions in the vicinity attempting to subdue the frontier, but eight were redeployed to a rebellion in the Balkans and two had moved further south to Mogontiacum (Mainz).

With the reduced Roman forces, Arminius saw his chance. At some point, he had secretly brokered an alliance between the Germanic chieftoms of the area. Together, they laid a series of ambushes in the forest. As a Roman prefect, Arminius laid the trap and reported to Varus that there had been a rebellion. Varus responded by mustering all three legions to the site.

The slow-going Romans became prime targets for the now-united Germanic warriors who attacked the long line of marching troops. It was a blood-bath. Turns out it had also been Arminius's idea to make the Roman summer encampment near his Cherusci homeland, letting him observe, spy and plan with his rebel cohort and their local allies.

This crushing defeat came to be known as the **Varusschlacht**, or Varus' Disaster, and a museum (www.kalkriese-varusschlacht.de) marks the battlefield in a hamlet called Kalkriese. Here, archaeologists continue to find and display Roman equipment and thousands of coins (the battle happened just after payday). In English, it is often called the Battle of Teutoburg Forest, using the Roman name for the nearby woods.

Though the Romans did lead a revenge campaign and eventually retrieved the defeated legionary eagles, colonization eastward past the Rhine into the Germanic territories came to a halt.

Following the harrowing defeat, the Roman Empire began to create a series of border defenses to separate the Roman-controlled regions of Germania from the "barbarian" frontier. Known as the **Limes Germanicus** (boundary of Germania), the fortified border was built in phases.

Starting in the north, building the Lower German Limes (pronounced *leems*) began in the year 16 A.D. The fortifications follow the Rhine River from its mouth in the North Sea nearly to its juncture with the Mosel River.

Around 83 A.D., the limes project was renewed with a land border connecting the existing limes with the Danube River. The border ran east to include the important town of Mogontiacum (Mainz) and the junction of the Rhine and Main rivers and then it continued almost directly south. Called the Upper Germanic Limes, this land-based section was heavily fortified.

In the following century, around 145 A.D., the limes were again extended to follow the Danube eastward. This section is called the Raetian Limes as it bordered the Roman-controlled province of Raetia, the empire's large Alpine region.

A further section of fortifications, the Danube Limes, continued along the river past Germany all the way to the Black Sea. The limes are all part of the "Borders of the Roman Empire" UNESCO World Heritage site.



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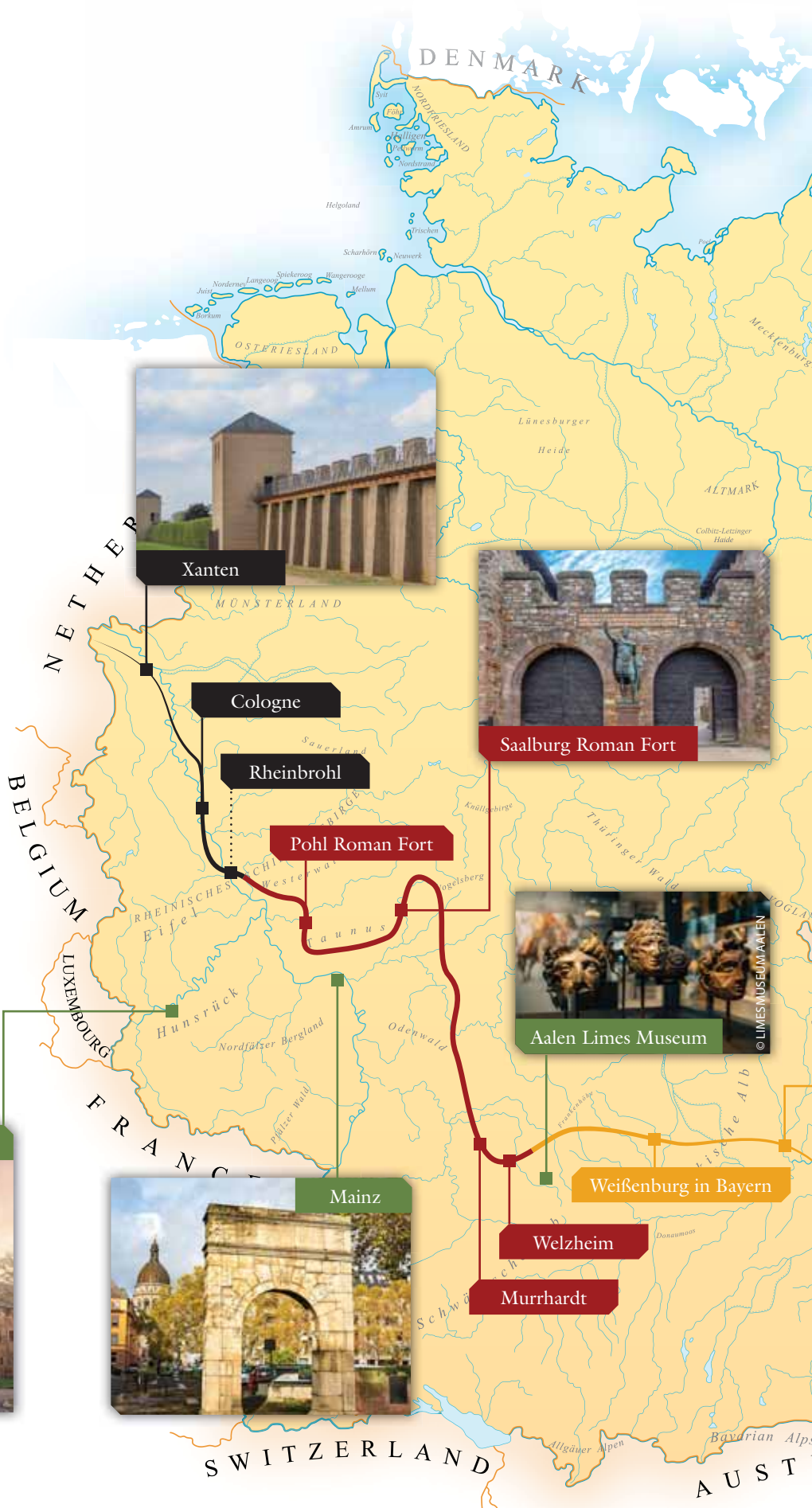
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Xanten



Saalburg Roman Fort



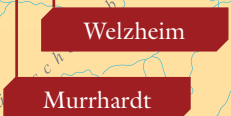
Aalen Limes Museum



Trier



Mainz



Welzheim

Weissenburg in Bayern

Murrhardt

ALONG THE LIMES

Major *colonia* (colonial cities) and *castra* (legionary forts) sprung up along the limes. Here are the highlights of what can still be visited today.

Deutsche Limes-Strasse | www.limesstrasse.de

This tourist route is presented as a driving tour, cycle path and hiking trail. The road and bike routes are roughly 1,100 km and trace the limes the whole way across Germany. The 550km hiking trail covers the Upper Germanic Limes section that is full of Roman relics. An interactive map on the website shows all of the Roman sites you can visit.

Archaeological Park Xanten apx.lvr.de/en

In the 2nd century, the Roman *colonia* of Ulpia Traiana was a large, diverse trading city along the Rhine. Today, it is Germany's biggest open-air archaeological museum. You can see an authentic amphitheater, travelers' hostel, baths, temple and craftsman houses, plus see the relics in the museum and play at the massive playground.

Cologne | www.cologne-tourism.com

Thriving since it was called *Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium* 2,000 years ago, Cologne (named after its status as a colony) is a thriving city with deep roots. A Roman tower, wall, sewer and fountain are just some of the artifacts hidden in plain sight. A trip to the Römisch-Germanisches Museum offers more detail.

Rheinbrohl | www.roemer-welt.de

This was the end of the line for the early Lower German Limes. Visit the RömerWelt living history museum for a taste of frontier life, check out the riverside watchtower or set out on the limes hike above town to see relics in the forest.

Pohl Roman Fort www.limeskastell-pohl.de

This authentic reconstruction shows how Romans used wood and earth to build their forts along the Limes. You can walk around the fort to see how Roman soldiers lived, visit the museum of archaeology finds and get a bite to eat in the *taberna*.

Mainz | www.mainz-tourismus.com

Roman Mogontiacum was a major military control center that became a port city along the Rhine and Main rivers. Today, you can still see a Roman theatre, parts of an aqueduct, temple foundations and the Roman-focused Leibniz Centre for Archaeology (LEIZA).

Saalburg Roman Fort www.saalburgmuseum.de

North of Frankfurt, this is Germany's most completely reconstructed Roman fort. At the site is a Roman restaurant and a museum that hosts many special events throughout the year, plus a short hiking trail to see the limes.

Murrhardt | www.murrhardt.de

The limes near this town were built in a perfectly straight line and you can still hike along the route to take in numerous watchtowers.

Welzheim | www.welzheim.de

This small town housed three connected forts and a civilian encampment. Begin at the excavated Ostkastell to learn about Roman frontier life. Then hike to the smaller Rötelsee fort and limes fortifications or walk the easy loop around town to the site of the Third Cavalry fort and Roman museum.

Aalen Limes Museum www.limesmuseum.de

This museum includes artifacts recovered from the adjacent Roman limes and fort barracks. Outside you can walk along the outline of the former cavalry section of the fort.

Weißenburg in Bayern museen-weissenburg.de

For a small town, this place packs a lot of Roman history. There is a Roman museum, well-preserved Roman baths, and the remains of Biriciana fort. The Raetian Limes information center is also headquartered here.

Regensburg | www.regensburg.de

Founded as a legionary fort on the Danube, the fortress of *Castra Regina* grew into a bustling city. Today, remnants of the fortress walls are still visible and incorporated into modern architecture. The Museum of History also houses a large Roman exhibit.

Trier | www.zentrum-der-antike.de

It isn't along the Limes, but Augusta Treverorum, named for the Treveri people of the region, was a colony that became an imperial city. The limes were built to protect prosperous places like this. Today, visitors can buy the Antikencard to see the large amphitheater, Roman baths, Porta Nigra and the State Museum. ■



THE Celts IN GERMANY

By Kat Nickola



Recreated Celtic town, Heuneburg

Celtic sites seem to be everywhere in pre-Roman Europe. From Ireland to Austria, their archaeology is dotted across multiple landscapes, including parts of southern Germany.

Archaeologists debate the origins of these ancient people and even debate the usage of the word Celtic. Pottery and art styles seem to suggest a spreading of common trade and technologies westward from eastern Germanic areas like Hallstatt, Austria. But recent DNA and language studies point to an origin from Atlantic coastal communities in Ireland, Britain, France and Spain. It's possible both are valid.

Nowadays, historians do not consider the Celts as a single people group. The word Celtic may refer to modern people with a Celtic language heritage (Brittany, Wales, Scotland, Ireland); this tends to be the British usage. In Europe, the word is more frequently used to refer to ancient Iron Age people who were unique culturally, but shared similar (but not identical) Celtic-based languages derived from Gaelic or Brittonic.

By the time of the Romans, from whom most of our information comes, Celtic-speaking people had a wide network of towns and trade across Germanic Europe and the British Isles. After the Roman Empire crumbled, Celtic languages were only left along its former fringes in places like Scotland and Ireland.

Parts of Germany were at the heart of Celtic-language lands, and it was these areas that saw a lot of Roman interaction. Today, numerous small sites dot the country. Many are part of non-profit archaeological clubs or local history museums. The www.vererein-keltenwelten.de website is a national association of Celtic sites and maintains a great directory of locations. You can also find Celtic heritage sites near you by typing "Keltisches" into Google Maps.



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Here are a few of the larger Celtic sites in the area:

1 EBERDINGEN-HOCHDORF (near Stuttgart)

The highlight of this Keltenmuseum is the contents and reconstruction of a local Celtic prince's richly furnished burial mound. There is also a living history farmstead with weekend experiences like yarn-dying, metalwork and weaving.

2 OTZENHAUSEN (near Baumholder)

A recreated, walled Celtic village sits at the base of the Dollberg mountain where a massive Celtic fortress stood 2,000 years ago. You can hike the old fortress wall and visit the living-history village to see demonstrations of life and skills during its Celtic heyday.

3 ALTMÜHLTAL (near Ansbach)

There are 18 stations along the 39km Altmühltal cycle path with reconstructions of Celtic city gates, houses and burial mounds. QR codes at the stops provide an immersive experience. There are also Neandertal relics and caves to explore.

4 RODENBACH (near Kaiserslautern)

At the edge of town is a Celtic burial mound from around 400 B.C. You can enter a reconstruction of the central chamber where a replica burial and expensive grave goods are on display. The gold jewelry, iron weapons and bronze vessels led people to call this the "Prince's grave of Rodenbach."

5 HEUNEBURG (south Baden-Württemberg)

A recreated Celtic town and nearby museum show off this thriving 4th century B.C. economic power center. Walk through the houses, check out the crafting demonstrations and admire the extensive burial mounds on the archaeological trail. ■



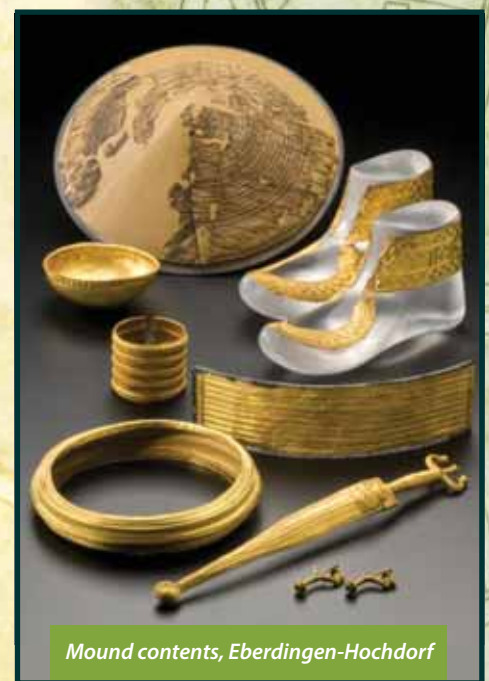
Celtic burial mound, Rodenbach



Old fortress wall, Otzenhausen



Gate reconstruction, Altmühltal



Mound contents, Eberdingen-Hochdorf



Recreated Celtic town, Heuneburg

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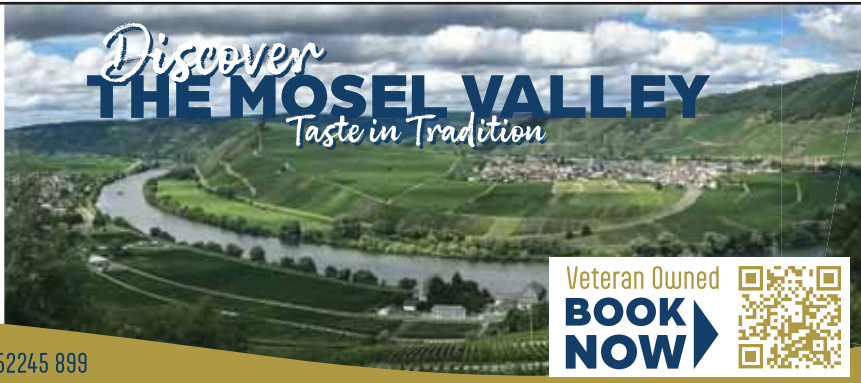


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PHOTO BY

Deanna McIntyre



Pula Arena in Pula, Croatia

At its peak, the Roman Empire spanned three continents and completely encompassed the Mediterranean Sea. It's no surprise that its ruins can be found as far away as **Pula, Croatia**. As photographer Deanna McIntyre states, the Pula Arena was "constructed between 27 B.C. and 68 A.D. during the reigns of Emperors Augustus and Vespasian and could hold up to 23,000 spectators, [and is] now used as a cultural venue for events such as the Pula Film Festival and concerts." ■



Europe has plenty of snowy mountains and slopes. We want to see photos of recent snow adventures: a ride with sled dogs, reindeer encounters and snow sports are just a few ideas. Send us Your Snapshot for a chance to be featured in a "What's Up" magazine!



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