

Rhine

The origin of the river's name "Rhine" (in German "Rhein") is not completely clear. It is assumed to be an early derivation of the intransient German verb "rinnen" (flow, run). The Celts called the river „Renos“, the Romans „Rhenus“ and in Rhaeto-Romanic it's called „Rein“ or (as in Italian) „Reno“, in French „Rhin“, in Dutch „Rijn“ and in English "Rhine". The German people refer to it as "Father Rhine".

The altogether approximately 1,320 km long river has a catchment area of over 252, 000 km². Together with the Bodensee, it comprises the drinking water reservoir for approximately 30 million people.

The Rhine originates to the west of the Swiss town of Chur through the confluence of the rear Rhine that springs in the vicinity of San Bernhardino mountain pass, and the front Rhine that comes from the Gotthard Massif towards the west. As an Alpine river, it has a pronouncedly high water level around the time of thawing—late spring and early summer. From Chur onwards, the Rhine flows to the north up to the Bodensee. This section of the river is called "Alpine Rhine". Its outlet is situated near Stein am Rhein (Switzerland) at the western end of the Bodensee. From there on, it flows in a westerly direction towards Basel as the so-called "High Rhine". South of Schaffhausen (Switzerland) the approximately 150 meter wide torrential river forms the approximately 20 m high Rhine falls, the largest waterfall in Central Europe. Later on it is joined by the Aare from the south, the first larger confluent river.

In Basel, the river takes a sharp turn towards the north and flows into the Rhine Rift Valley, a shallow-soled tectonic channel situated between the Vogese mountain chain in the west and the Black Forrest towards the east. To the far north of the Rhine Rift Valley is the French city of Strasbourg that represents a waterway-junction. Here is where the Neckar River joins it as the second largest confluent river coming from the southwest.

After the Main river flows into the Rhine near Mainz, the stream's seasonal behaviour becomes more balanced. For a short while, it now flows to the west and then turns towards the northwest near Bingen am Rhein. Up to here, the river is called "Upper Rhine". Afterwards the Middle Rhine flows through the southern part of the Rhenish Slate Mountains in a steep, narrow valley. Here we find the Hunsrück on the left of the Rhine and the Taunus mountains towards the right. This picturesque narrow valley goes on up to Koblenz, where the river Mosel joins the Rhine from the southwest and the Lahn river from the northeast and then carries on towards Bonn. This stretch of the river between Bingen and Bonn is among the most beautiful of the entire course of the Rhine. There is still a large number of splendid castles to be admired here, an indication that the Rhine was already the most important waterway in all of Europe way before our time. There is hardly a castle or rock along the Rhine that is not connected with a tale or legend. The most famous of them all is undoubtedly that of beautiful Loreley, who enchanted the Rhine skippers with her song so much that they no longer paid heed to the rapids and crashed on the rocks together with their boats.

From Bonn onwards downriver, the river, which is now called "Lower Rhine", flows through the German state of North-Rhine-Westphalia. Important stops along the way are Cologne, Duesseldorf and Duisburg. Along the river Ruhr, a small confluent of the Rhine along the east that empties near Duisburg, is the Ruhr District, one of the largest industrial areas in the world.

Near to the border to Holland (close to Emerich), the Rhine is approximately 730 meters wide. Here, it separates into two parallel river branches, Lek and Waal. Then it crosses a wide, marshy plain and finally empties into the North Sea. A large part of this area is at or below sea level. However, the construction of dykes contributed to the fact that one of the most densely populated and economically important areas in Europe sprang up here. Here, the Rhine causes floods again and again that become graver and graver every year, probably because of the

increasing ecological damages that occur in the headwaters of the Rhine and its confluents. The worst flooding catastrophe took place here in January of 1995, during which approximately 250,000 people had to be evacuated in the Netherlands, because it was feared that the river would flood the dykes below Nimwegen.

From its delta onwards upriver to Rheinfelden (east of Basel), the Rhine is navigable on a stretch of around 880 km. All of Europe's main rivers, among them the Seine, Elbe, Ems, Marne, Rhône, and Saône, are connected with it through canals. The Main-Donau-Canal, inaugurated in 1992, is the youngest of these artificial waterways and connects the Rhine with the Donau via the Main and thus the North Sea with the Black Sea. Altogether, the canal net comprises the 3,500 km long Rhein-Main-Donau major waterway. The most important harbour in the Rhine delta is Rotterdam, in the inland area it is Duisburg. The Rhine drains one of the central economic areas in Western Europe, a region that is well known for its rich natural resources as well as its numerous industrial sites and intensive agriculture. The main goods that are transported on the river today are coal, iron ore, grain, potash, mineral oil, iron, steel, and wood, among others. Tourism on and along the river also plays an important role.

The increasing shipping traffic and the constantly mounting industrialisation in the neighbouring regions has, however, lead to grave environmental problems. In the 60ies and 70ies, the Rhine pollution became especially imminent, which finally lead to the conclusion of a contract for the improvement of the Rhine conditions in 1976 between the Netherlands, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Luxembourg and Switzerland. Despite some problems during the implementation of the contract, the condition of the river slowly improved. Today, the Rhine in North-Rhine-Westphalia again houses 43 different species of fish and two types of crustaceans, evidence of a much-improved water quality.

Km 526.7	Right	Rüdesheim , (10,300 inhabitants) was the terminal point of the "Merchant Road" that originates in Lorch and circumvented the waterfalls. Due to its commercial significance, castles secured the location. Close to the train station is * Brömserburg (or Niederburg), castles that date back to the 10 th century. It is a former customs station and served as the seat of the Knights of Rüdesheim for centuries. Behind it is * Boosenburg (or Mittelburg) with its preserved donjon. The remains of the old * Vorderburg can still be found in the centre of town. Its excellent wines and the delightful and varied landscape turned Rüdesheim into one of the most lively tourism centres of the Middle Rhine. Countless public houses line the famous Drosselgasse. Rüdesheim is situated at the foot of Niederwald forest, a foothill of the Rheingau mountain chain with an elevation of up to 344 m. Together with the opposite hills near Bingen, they mark the beginning of the Rhine breakthrough into the Rhenish slate mountains. The Niederwald memorial, a statue of Germania with a height of 10.5 m that rests on a 25 m high base, is situated on the mountain ridge 225 m above the Rhine and can be seen for miles. It was erected to commensurate the renewal of the empire in 1871.
Km 528.4	Left	Bingen , (24,800 inhabitants). Close to an older settlement, the Romans constructed the castle „Bingium“ and laid a bridge across the Nahe river. Amidst beautiful stone gardens is * Burg Klopp , a castle that was erected in place of a Roman castle in the 13 th century and blasted by the French in 1711. Today's buildings date back to the end of the 19 th century. Above the city is the elevated park Rochusberg with Rochus chapel, which can be seen for miles and was erected in 1666 when the plague ravaged the country. The chapel was reconstructed in the years 1889 to 1894. A railroad bridge, a street bridge and an early Roman druse bridge constructed on Roman foundations lead across to the left banks of the Nahe river to the municipal district of Bingerbrück.

Km 529.1	Left	<i>Emptying of the Nahe River into the Rhine</i>
Km 529.4	Left	<p>Today, Bingerbrück is a municipal district of Bingen. Here St. Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) founded the Benedictine convent Rupertsberg, which had to make way for the railroad in the middle of the 19th century after having been destroyed in the 17th century.</p> <p>The Benedictine Hildegard of Bingen, born in 1098 in Bermersheim near Alzey as the child of a count had the gift of vision since early childhood. However, she wasn't only a visionary but also a great mystic and admonisher, musician and founder of a convent, well versed in nature and healing. The large interest in Hildegard of Bingen today is based on the modernity of her writings about nature and healing that are conform to the holistic way of thinking at the end of the 20th century.</p>
Km 530.2	Left	<p>Mäuseturm (Mouse Tower), a former watchtower (13th/14th century) of the customs castle Ehrenfels, situated atop a rocky island. In 1855, the top part of the tower was changed significantly and now serves as a signalling station for ships that pass the Bingen hole. The name "Mouse Tower" was derived from the word "Maut" (toll). According to legend, the name can be explained as follows: at the beginning of the 10th century, Hatto, Archbishop of Mainz, ruled here for years. He was infamous for his gluttony, insolence and hardheartedness. Then the country was besieged by plagues. Hunger and destitute ruled the country, but Hatto didn't feel any of it, as his storehouses were full to the rim. The starving people begged the rich church dignitary for food, but the cruel man didn't want to hear any of it. When the pleas increased, he had the beggars seized, locked in a barn and burnt to death. This way, the evildoer may have suppressed the uprising, but he did not manage to escape God's punishment. Late one evening, mice suddenly came out of all the walls and crevices and attacked the frightened man. He managed to escape and finally found shelter in a lonely tower that rose up over the little Rhine island. There he had his bed suspended from chains. But the mice followed him, crawled through all bars and cracks and gnawed away at him with sharp teeth until Hatto finally perished. As soon as this happened, the army of mice scattered in all directions and was never seen again. Since then, the place where the Bishop met his rightful end was called "Mouse Tower". Still today, it is rumoured that his ghost floats around the ancient ruin like a grey cloud in dark nights, when the wind howls and the waves crash against the shore. Because of his heavy guilt, the Bishop has still not found eternal peace.</p>
Km 530.4	Right	<p>★ Ehrenfels, the ruins of an old castle situated halfway amidst grapevines. The castle was erected around 1211 upon order of the Archbishop of Mainz in order to secure the narrow Rhine valley near Bingen. Later on, it received customs rights and was destroyed by the French in 1689.</p>
Km 530.7	Right	<p>Binger Loch (Bingen Hole) a river strait at the breakthrough of the Rhine, 250m wide and interspersed with shoals and reefs. Up until the late middle ages, this place was impassable. All goods between Geisenheim (or Rüdesheim) and Lorch had to be transported on land. Finally, at the end of the Middle Ages, an artificial fairway was constructed, which was expanded for the first time at the beginning of the 19th century. Since 1974, the fairway with its breadth of 120 m and a depth of 2.10 m finally enables shipping traffic in both directions.</p>
Km 530.7	Left	<p>Memorial from the year 1832 to commensurate the first widening of the Bingen Hole.</p>

Km 532.2	Right	Assmannshausen , a winegrowing location famous for its red wine at the foot of Niederwald forest. Today a municipal district of Rüdesheim. Even the Romans already knew about the lithium-bearing alkaline thermal spring that is visited by people plagued by gout and rheumatism.
Km 533	Left	★ Rheinstein Castle is among the oldest castle buildings at the Rhine and was originally constructed as an imperial castle for the exercise of custom rights. With its drawbridge, ivy-covered walls and splendid view of the Rhine, it is an important example of Romanesque reconstruction. The exact year of construction is unknown but one assumes that the history of the castle dates back to the 9 th century. Back then it was called "Vogtberg". It was renamed frequently until the 19 th century until it finally received the name Rheinstein, which it has kept until today. Here you have the possibility to spend the night in a tower chamber.
Km 534.1	Left	Clemens Chapel (13 th century)
Km 534.5	Left	★ Reichenstein , also called "Falkenburg" in the 19 th century, is a castle hotel today. It was erected to protect the property of Cornelimünster abbey near Aachen in the 11 th century, destroyed in 1282 by Rudolf of Habsburg and fortified again later on. In 1688 it was again destroyed, this time by the French. It was reconstructed in 1899.
Km 535.4	Left	Trechtingshausen (1,100 inhabitants)
Km 537.4	Left	★ Sooneck Castle was probably constructed as early as the 11 th century. Together with Rheinstein Castle, it was part of a fortified castle system that served to protect the abbey. The former inhabitants of the castle as well those of the neighbouring Reichenstein Castle lead a violent life of club law, raised inappropriate Rhine taxes and conducted rape and pillage.
Km 539.4	Left	Niederheimbach , a stretched-out area shadowed by the mighty tower of ★ Heimburg Castle that was completed in 1305, destroyed in 1689 and reconstructed in the 19 th century. Due to its position at the Rhine, Heimburg Castle served for the collection of Rhine taxes in the 13 th and 14 th century like many other castles in the middle ages. But just like the nearby castles Reichenstein and Sooneck, Heimburg castles was a retreat for robber barons until Rudolf of Habsburg put an end to these wheelings and dealings. Heimburg is still under private ownership today.
Km 539.8	Right	Lorch (4,500 inhabitants). The old winegrowing village of Lorch is situated at the opening of Wispertal valley into the Rhine valley and rich with castles. Above the village amidst vineyards is ★ Nollig Castle , erected around 1300, the remains of an old town fortification.
Km 540.3	Left	<i>Junction of the Wisper</i>
Km 541	Left	Rheindiebach , a village formerly fortified by a ringwall, governed by Fürstenberg Castle constructed in 1219 for the protection of the Cologne possessions and customs place. Destroyed by the French in 1689.
Km 542	Right	Lorchhausen , district of Lorch
Km 543	Left	Bacharach (2,300 inhabitants) is a picturesque small town and an old storage place for Rheingau wines and still features an old ringwall full of turrets. On the hiking path up to Stahleck Castle is the old red sandstone ruin of the Gothic Werner chapel declining since the 18 th century.
Km 543.1	Left	★ Stahleck . Stahleck Castle, erected in the 11 th century, was at first the seat of the archiepiscopal governors of Cologne, and a residency of the Palatine counts and centre of the Palatinate countship near the Rhine in the 12 th century. The French

		destroyed it in 1689. Today there's a youth hostel in the ruin. Especially worth mentioning are the water-filled moat and the inner wall.
Km 545	Right	<p>★ Palatinate near Kaub. „A stone ship, eternally swimming on the Rhine, eternally moored facing the count palatine city " (Victor Hugo, 1802 to 1885, diary of the Rhine trip). The picturesque Palatinate on a rocky island in the Rhine is one of the most curious castle creations in the world. Erected in 1326 by King Ludwig the Bavarian on the rocky reef Falkenau, Pfalzgrafenstein, contrary to most other castles, was constructed for purely economic reasons and only served as a customs station. The "Palatinate in the Rhine" as it is called today, is among the few intact medieval knights' castles at the Rhine besides Marksburg Castle that towers above Braubach. The palatinate has been the property of the state of Rhineland-Palatinate since 1946. Up until the 1960s, the Palatinate was used as a signal station for the shipping traffic on the Rhine. At the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, the Palatinate at the Rhine was completely renovated and repaired. Today it serves exclusively for sightseeing and study purposes.</p>
Km 546.3	Right	Kaub , (1,200 inhabitants). Old Kaub, a former customs station and traditional residence for ship's pilots is still an important winegrowing location on the Middle Rhine.
Km 546.5	Right	<p>★ Gutenfels. "Gutenfels Castle" got its name after the landgrave Wilhelm of Hesse tried in vain to besiege it in 1504. After it was partially torn down since 1807, the castle was reconstructed from 1889 until 1892. It features its own winery with a 600-year old tradition and serves as a hotel today.</p>
Km 549.1	Left	Like almost all other Rhine castles, ★ Schönburg Castle was plundered, burnt down and destroyed by the troops of the Sun King Louis XIV in the year 1689. Afterwards, Schönburg Castle lay in ruins for about 200 years. After extensive renovations, it serves as a luxury hotel with a first-class view today.
Km 550	Left	Oberwesel , (4,300 inhabitants), only referred to as Wesel until the 17th century. A ringwall equipped with 16 turrets still leads around the location.
Km 551	Right	<p>The Sieben Jungfrauen (Seven Virgins) is a group of rocks that protrude from the stream below Oberwesel when the water level is low. The following tale is told about them: once upon a time, seven beautiful virgins lived on Schönburg Castle. Their beauty gave the castle its name ("Castle Beautiful"). As beautiful as these seven ladies were, as strong was their rejection of the idea of love. One suitor after the next was rejected and no woes were heard. One day, seven young knights with the most precious clothes and the finest of manners introduced themselves and courted the virgins. But the ladies also rejected these young men. Suddenly the skies went dark, loud music resounded and each of the knights seized one of the sisters. Dancing and turning, they swung their way out of the castle, down the mountain and directly into the river that simmered with thunder and lightning. When the river calmed down again, seven rocky tips protruded from the water. These were the seven virgins whose cold-heartedness had turned them to stone. The skippers on the Rhine know this place very well and continue the tale as follows: the virgins will only be released from their stony prison when a strong man comes along that is capable of lifting these rocks from the stream and constructs the pillars of a chapel with them. Then they could return to their castle and finally each marry a man after their century-long penance.</p>

Km 554.2	Right	<p>Loreley. This jagged slate rock with a height of 132m (433ft) is located at a section of the river that is not easy to navigate. The Rhine is only 102 m wide here but up to 25m (82ft) deep. Once, as the tale has it, the skippers were beguiled by the chants of the Loreley and perished in the stream. The river carves its way through a steep, narrow gorge, winding around jagged rocks and creating powerful whirlpools, which have sucked many a ship below the surface. The gorge, with its 132m (433ft) cliffs, is so narrow that the railway line that runs alongside the river has been cut into rock tunnels. A bronze statue of the naked maiden Lorelei looks down on the river from where, as related by the poem by Heinrich Heine in 1824, the mysterious nymph would once appear, captivating sailors with her beauty and her hypnotic singing before luring them onto the rocks to their death. The poem <i>Die Lorelei</i>, set to music in 1837, is seen as the epitome of Rhine Romanticism. Part of the Rhenish Slate Massive, the rock has a fine viewing point and visitor center at the top.</p>
Km 554.6	Right	<p>The Statue of Loreley on the tip of the long-stretched narrow spit. The tale of the Loreley became world-famous through Heinrich Heine's song: Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedeuten Dass ich so traurig bin; Ein Märchen aus alten Zeiten, Das kommt mir nicht aus dem Sinn. (I don't what it means Me being so sad; A tale from olden days, Won't leave me in peace.) Die Luft ist kühl und es dunkelt, Und ruhig fließt der Rhein; Der Gipfel des Berges funkelt Im Abendsonnenschein. (The air is cool and it is growing dark, And the Rhein is flowing peacefully; The pinnacle of the mountain is sparks In evening sun shine.)</p> <p>Die schönste Jungfrau sitzet Dort oben wunderbar; Ihr goldenes Geschmeide blitzet, Sie kämmt ihr goldenes Haar. (The most beautiful virgin sits Up there in splendour; Her golden jewellery sparkles, She combs her golden hair.) Sie kämmt es mit goldenem Kamme Und singt ein Lied dabei; Das hat eine wundersame, Gewaltige Melodei. (She combs with a golden comb While she sings a song; That has a wonderful,</p>

		<p>Powerful melody.)</p> <p>Den Schiffer im kleinen Schiffe Er greift es mit wildem Weh; Er schaut nicht die Felsenriffe, Es schaut nur hinauf in die Höh. (The skipper in the small ship He is taken with wild grief; He looks not at the reef of rocks, He only looks up high above.) Ich Glaube, die Wellen verschlingen Am Ende Schiffer und Kahn; Und das hat mit ihrem Singen Die Lore-Ley getan. (I believe the waves drew under The skipper and the boat in the end; And this through the singing Of the Loreley.)</p>
Km 555.9	Right	<p>★ Katz Castle (actually Neu-Katzenelnbogen), founded by Count Johann III of Katzenelnbogen in 1370, decayed in the 18th century and fully destroyed by the French in 1806. Reconstructed around 1897. In 1989, a Japanese businessman purchased the castle and had it expanded into a luxury hotel for several million DM.</p>
Km 556.1	Left	<p>Sankt Goar (3,300 inhabitants). Archaeological excavations have shown that the present municipal area was already populated during Roman times. The skippers needed helping hands in order to overcome the reefs at the Loreley rock. There was probably a ferry across the Rhine that connected Roman roads with each other. The little settlement owes its name to Saint Goar. He settled here around 550 and founded a Christian hostel for needy people and travellers.</p>
Km 556.3	Right	<p>Sankt Goarshausen (1,600 inhabitants). A little old small town at the foot of Katz Castle.</p>
Km 556.9	Left	<p>★ Rheinfels. A castle ruin that thrones a cliff 115 m above the Rhine. The once mighty fortress of the Middle Rhine, one of the most important ones along the Rhine, was founded in 1245 and blasted by the French in 1797. After 1818, the ruins were used for the construction of Ehrenbreitstein fortress. Today it houses a castle hotel.</p>
Km 558.7	Right	<p>★ Maus Castle, also called Deuernburg or Thurnberg, is one of the most advanced installations of its time and among the most technically advance and splendid buildings overall. Besides the newly constructed hipped roofs and the restored wall stucco, Maus Castle has not lost any of its medieval charm. Maus Castle became the well-loved residence of the Archbishop of Trier, Boemund, and his two successors, the well-known Archbishop Kuno of Falkenstein and Werner of Königstein. The counts of Katzenelnbogen with their residence in Katz Castle labelled it "Mouse Castle", as it was much smaller than their castle. Because of missing restoration work and destruction in several wars, Maus Castle ended up as a ruin in 1806. It took until the middle of the past century (1900 until 1906) when</p>

		the ruins of the castle were restored by the architect Gärtner, who maintained its medieval character and appearance.
Km 558.9	Right	Wellmich a small medieval town at the foot of Maus Castle. Today a district of St. Goarshausen.
Km 560	Right	Ehrental , a former convent of the Prüm abbey.
Km 562.5	Left	Hirzenach , a municipal district of Boppard
Km 563.3	Right	Kestert (850 inhabitants)
Km 566	Left	Bad Salzig , a municipal district of Boppard surrounded by orchards. Here one finds the Glauber Salt-bearing Leonorenquelle, which gave the town the name "Karlsbad at the Rhine" in the 20 th century.
Km 566.5	Right	★ Liebenstein and ★ Sterrenberg . Situated in a splendid spot high above the Rhine, Liebenstein Castle, erected in the 12 th or 13 th century, features a remarkable Gothic residential tower (14 th century), remnants of the donjon on a separate rock and a small tenement in the east. Liebenstein Castle was a "Ganerbenburg" (a castle occupied by several families in different houses), belonged to Nassau-Saarbrücken later on and received imperial knight's status. Both castles are known as "Enemy Bothers". This tale dates back to a family quarrel that took place in the two castles over years. The exact history is not known but it is alleged that the two sons of the burgrave of Sterrenberg and Liebenstein initiated the quarrel. The brothers tried to tamper with the division of the inheritance with unlawful means. The two armed walls the knights of Sterrenberg Castle used to protect themselves from the knights of Liebenstein Castle can still be seen today.
Km 567	Right	Kamp-Bornhofen (1,800 inhabitants). First officially mentioned in the 13th century, the convent church houses picturesque art treasures from times gone by. Over 200,000 pilgrims annually visit and admire the piety of the Holy Virgin, the high marble altar from the 18th century, the pulpit and many other curiosities. The ship processions that have been taking place since the middle ages are events that no other place of pilgrimage has to offer in Germany.
Km 570.5	Left	Boppard (16,400 inhabitants) is situated at one of the largest Rhine bends famous for its vineyards, the "Boppard Hamm". Many populations felt comfortable in Boppard and the middle ages have left some lasting traces: cairns, the Roman Castle, the medieval town wall, the electoral castle, several convents and churches bear witness to that. The electoral castle, originally set up as a water castle, is situated directly at the Rhine promenade of Boppard. Contemplative half-timbered houses and stylish villas from the days of the new Rhine romanticist period are intermingled. The Boppard wine still has an excellent reputation and was first originally mentioned over 1350 years ago. This is self-explanatory if one keeps in mind that the largest connected vineyard slopes at Boppard Hamm at the Middle Rhine with their 75 ha of cultivation area are among the steepest in Germany.