



NATIONAL PARKS IN GERMANY

Wild and beautiful

Nationale
Naturlandschaften



**Nationalpark
Bayerischer Wald**



Freyunger Straße 2
94481 Grafenau
Tel. 08552 9600-0, Fax -100
poststelle@npv-bw.bayern.de
www.nationalpark-bayerischer-wald.de

**Nationalpark
Jasmund**



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**Nationalpark
Vorpommersche
Boddenlandschaft**



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**Nationalpark
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**Nationalpark
Wattenmeer**



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**Nationalpark
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www.nationalpark-eifel.de

**Müritz-
Nationalpark**



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Tel. 039824 252-0, Fax -50
poststelle@npa-mueritz.mvnet.de
www.mueritz-nationalpark.de

**Nationalpark
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20355 Hamburg
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**Nationalpark
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www.nationalpark-hainich.de

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www.nationalpark-wattenmeer-
erleben.de

**Nationalpark
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**Nationalpark
Unteres Odertal**



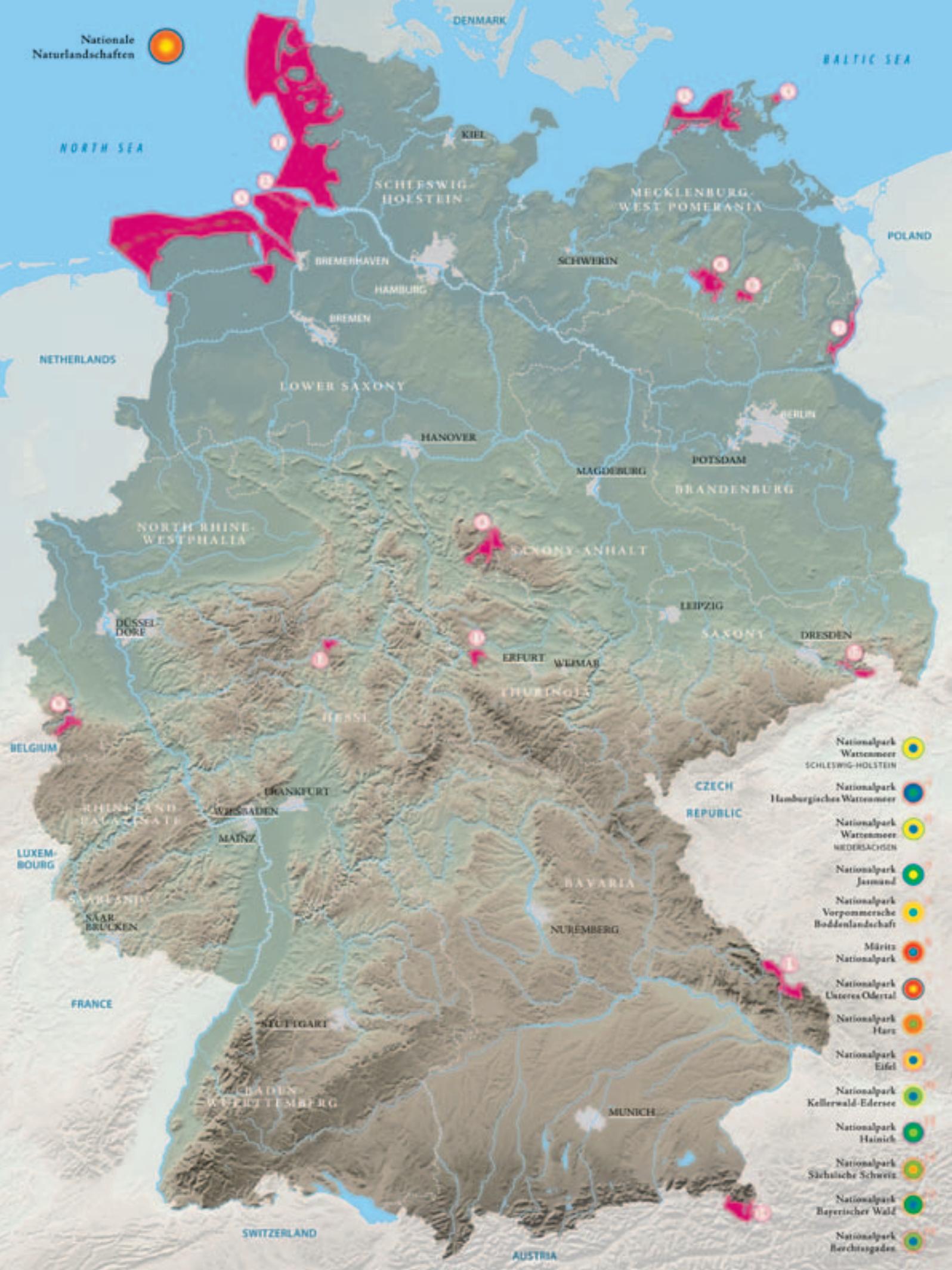
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www.nationalpark-unteres-
odertal.eu

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for Nature Conservation
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National Park

Federal state border

MAINZ, State capital

0 50 km

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Preamble

*National Parks are
nature's treasure troves*

National Parks are in many ways a mirror of a country's best natural features and, therefore, a particular focus of public perception. The 'tradition of National Parks' in Germany is relatively new. However, it can already look back on 40 years. In 1970 the Bavarian Forest National Park became the first German National Park. The National Parks received a special boost with the so-called 'National Park Programme' in the former GDR in 1990. Nowadays, the 14 designated National Parks in Germany have not only found respect and acceptance in vast circles of the population but are also characterised by the high added-value they have brought to the respective regions. Current studies, sponsored by the BfN (Federal Agency for Nature Conservation), show that National Parks – with their approximately 10.5 million National Park tourists, defined in a fairly narrow sense, generate annually an additional revenue of approximately € 431 million in revenue. This equates to the equivalent of 14,000 incomes. The population increasingly recognises that this offers opportunities and that they can be proud of their heritage. In this respect, National Parks are a success story for nature conservation. An important contribution to this success is a common brand for all the parks in that they use different versions of the same umbrella brand established by the EUROPARC Germany's 'National Natural Landscapes'.

These achievements are largely due to the establishment of independent regional authorities by the respective federal states and to the strong commitment by its staff. National Park Authorities carry out a wide range of tasks. This not only includes the immediate protection of the biodiversity and the regional management but also research and monitoring, environmental education and communication of the experience of nature, active publicity work as well as close cooperation with various parties on site.



One of the central tasks of a future-oriented policy is to preserve these treasures as part of the natural heritage of our country for future generations. This means that in addition to a more thorough identification and implementation of highly-protected core zones in the existing National Parks, one must think about where more National Parks could be established in Germany. This is particularly necessary in order to achieve one of the main goals of the National Biodiversity Strategy, namely to establish 2% of Germany's land area as wilderness areas by 2020. So far, this target has only been achieved partially, with a much greater potential still awaiting its fulfilment.

For over 100 years, nature conservation has been the responsibility of the German government, and should remain this way. Nevertheless, in order to preserve and develop our national nature heritage, as well as to keep our fellow-citizens informed about the current developments and processes in the areas, it remains important that National Park Authorities remain well-staffed, well-financed and stay close to the people. As for the future, I can assure of the continued active support from the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation for the very many tasks of our National Parks.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'B. Jessel'.

PROF. DR. BEATE JESSEL
PRESIDENT OF THE
FEDERAL AGENCY FOR NATURE CONSERVATION
(BUNDESAMT FÜR NATURSCHUTZ – BfN)



Wilderness in Germany? Where can you find it?

Wilderness simply means to 'let nature be nature', and this exactly is the golden rule governing all the fourteen National Parks in Germany. In these places, nature is allowed to develop untrammelled – free from human interference. Karl Friedrich Sinner is the managing director of the Bavarian Forest National Park and Chairman of the Board of EUROPARC Germany and thus the expert for all questions regarding wilderness areas in Germany.

In the Bavarian Forest National Park, nature is allowed to follow its own immutable laws of living and dying, of growth, decay and rebirth into a vast forest wilderness.

One usually associates wilderness with areas like the Amazon rainforest, Siberia or the Serengeti. Can one really find wilderness in Germany?

The central regions in the fourteen German National Parks offer a great variety of wilderness. They are called 'core zones'. Mountain streams and avalanche tracks, the spruce-rich wild forests of the National Parks, the ancient native deciduous forests of National Parks in Central Germany, river and coastal landscapes – all of them contain within them wilderness today.

Can wilderness be defined?

Wilderness cannot be narrowly defined. It is something very personal that people feel at the sight of untouched nature but it can be experienced in its full diversity and vibrancy. Wilderness needs space, needs freedom from the effects of civilisation and is also a place where we humans have to behave responsibly.

Why is wilderness so important for Germany?

Recent studies have shown that the core areas of the National Parks are hot spots of biodiversity; they provide us with a first impression of what natural biodiversity means for our country. Untouched wilderness, with its highly differentiated development phases, provides us with important insights into the right CO₂ balance and CO₂ bonding. Furthermore, in water conservation areas where there is no fishing we can marvel at the former abundance available in the seas and oceans. To be in touch again with wilderness is also one of the profound experiences humans can have when encountering nature. Wilderness is an experience of genesis for people – adventure, myth, fairy-tale worlds, an encounter with a wild beauty and the forces of nature.

The slogan 'let nature be nature' is a fundamental principle of the National Parks. How large is the proportion of untouched wilderness in the National Parks?

Currently, the proportions vary greatly because some National Parks are not very old. All National Parks strive to achieve 75% of their areas as untouched nature, newly emerging wilderness. By the way: it is a commonly-held misunderstanding that people are not allowed to enter the core areas of the National Parks. In all National Parks, all aspects of nature and wilderness can be experienced, just not everywhere, at all times or at all locations in the National Park.

What successes have been achieved in recent years in the core areas?

In the areas in the National Parks where wilderness is developing, there is a noticeable increase in biodiversity and dynamic developments in nature, which turn out to be quite different from our traditional notions of preserving species and habitat protection. Many extremely endangered mosses, fungi, insects, birds as well as amphibians, mammals and fish have benefited from this development. Even species that were considered lost or extinct can now be found in the core zones of the National Parks.

From your perspective, where does the future of German National Parks lie?

We need to continue along the same route. 40 years of the Bavarian Forest National Park and 100 years of National Parks in Europe show that National Parks are crucial for society and nature. As a core element of the National Natural Landscapes, they are essential for preserving the treasure trove of our country's natural heritage in the world-wide network of National Parks and to raise awareness. Wilderness is, after all, a crucial component of the Federal government's Biodiversity Strategy. 2% of the whole country's area should become wilderness again whereas currently we have only reached approximately 0.5%.

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Karl Friedrich Sinner,
director of the Bavarian
Forest National Park and
board member of EUROPARC
Germany, the umbrella
organisation of the National
Natural Landscapes.



The National Parks in Germany

When, in 1872, the Yellowstone area in the USA became the first natural landscape to be protected as a National Park an example was set, a new idea was born. Today there are more than 3,800 National Parks in over 120 countries around the world. In Europe, the first National Parks were established in 1909 in Sweden and 1914 in Switzerland – Germany followed suit in 1970 with the Bavarian Forest National Park.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the lynx has quietly returned to its original home, the Bavarian Forest and the Harz.

Protect, explore and experience biological diversity

National Parks are landscapes where nature remains nature. Just like a 'Noah's Ark', they fulfil a crucial role in the protection of animals and plants, by preserving the autonomy of nature and refuge areas. They leave space for natural development processes and for the self-regulation of nature. Economic exploitation of nature in National Parks is largely excluded. These areas are intended for observation and exploration of natural processes. The knowledge thus gained contributes to a sustainable use of the forces of nature outside of the National Parks, to saving costs and avoiding future mistakes when dealing with nature.

For many people today it is only rarely possible to experience wild nature first-hand. National Parks are unique spaces for such an experience of nature and also excellent places for environmental education. Insights into the natural cycle of birth, death and rebirth are part of the experience that National Parks can give.

'Natural' regional promotion

National Parks are intertwined with their local environment in many ways and shape the appearance of the region. As the image carrier for nature and culturally sustainable tourism, offering many special ways of experiencing nature, National Parks promote environmentally appropriate, regional economic development and safeguard jobs. This means that German National Parks are far more than just well-protected reserves for nature conservation. Rather, they represent a unique challenge and opportunity for people and nature, to preserve the past and future. Against this background, National Park Authorities see themselves as organisation equally committed to people and nature.

Visitors are welcome

The all-year-round programme of National Parks never stops. Nature's 'festivals' can be experienced in any season – the colourful autumn with the sky as canvas for spectacular bird migration, the forests veiled in snow clouds in winter, spring's emotional colour explosion and the lush green of summer, with its warm breezes and animal noises one cannot help but try and identify. National Parks are, of course, best explored on foot, by bike or by boat.

National Park Partners

The National Park Partners in Germany help to protect the unique and fascinating nature in their particular area. Most National Park Partner companies – restaurants, accommodation providers or shipping companies – adopt the excellent criteria of the Viabono ecolabel. Not only are you in great hands with these hosts, but you are also making a positive contribution to the National Park when you choose a National Park Partner.

Wide range of activities

The National Park Authorities and their partners offer a wide range of varied activities for all ages: nature trails for outdoor enthusiasts, adventure play areas for children and seasonal events for the whole family. In visitor centres, you can find information about the respective National Park, its various offers – for example excursions, wildlife animal watching and adventure hikes – and the region. You can also enjoy regional highlights such as outdoor museums, farm shops with local produce or cultural events.

In recent years, National Parks have become even more attractive – even for people who find travelling more difficult than others. Today, most National Parks offer barrier-free activities and this trend is on the increase. Please check with the National Park Authorities, the tourist boards or the Internet for more offers. However, you must bring something with you: time – time to distance yourself from everyday life and time to reach the places that reveal the impressive diversity of nature.



Bavarian Forest
National Park



The Bavarian Forest National Park is an impressive testament to the astonishing diversity and vitality generated by nature, without human intervention. Over 300 kilometres of clearly waymarked paths run to lonely peaks and along inviting valleys, through virgin forests, and in the winter months, through pristine areas heavily covered with snow. In two large animal outdoor enclosures you can, with a bit of luck, peek into the 'living rooms' of wild animals such as lynx, wolf and bear. The world's longest tree-top trail opens up breath-taking views.

When hiking through the protected area with an open mind, one is quickly captured by its powerful, unspoiled yet somewhat dark primeval nature. On usually rough paths, one comes across huge root plates of fallen tree giants and granite blocks covered with a lush green moss carpet, some as tall as houses. Apart from that, you could also come across numerous raised bogs, streams and lakes, so characteristic of the Bavarian Forest.

More than 40 years ago, in 1970, nature was gradually allowed to run its course. Together with its counterpart on the Czech side, Šumava National Park, it is now the largest contiguous forest reserve in Central Europe.

The gently sloping forest areas show all the typical characteristics of a German medium-high mountain range, where mountains like the Lusen, Rachel and Falkenstein rise up to 1,453 meters high. Today, out of the decaying trees, a variety of natural forest is growing again, including the previously rare white pine, beeches and spruces, this after large parts of the old forest had fallen victim to acid rain, extreme weather and the infamous bark beetle.

For centuries, people exploited the scarcely populated Nordwald (northern forest) for their own purposes. As early as the 14th century, they built the first glassworks, as the raw materials required for glass production were available here in abundance. With the transition of all use and ownership rights to the Bavarian government, from 1850 onwards, an equally rigorous and systematic exploitation of the forest commenced. The forests in the valley and mountain areas were largely felled and the soils drained. This often resulted in monotonous plantations of spruce.

Today, the newly planted spruce trees are spreading again in the wet valleys where cold air builds up. In contrast, the natural mixed alpine forest prefers warmer slopes. 'Right at the top', from 1,200 meters onwards, the winters are long and snowy. Here only the mountain spruce and the mountain ash can withstand the rough climate.

About 700 plant species grow in the National Park, including rarities such as the Bohemian gentian and the Soldanella (also known as alpine snowbell) with its violet flowers. These vast forests are home to red deer, the eagle owl, the three-toed and white-backed woodpecker, and Europe's smallest owl, the pygmy owl. Since its successful reintroduction by man into the Bohemian Forest, the lynx once again wanders through the Bavarian Forest.



Currently, no wild brown bears live unenclosed in the Bavarian Forest National Park. They feel, however, completely at home in the vast outdoor enclosures.

A day in the National Park

The National Park Centres Falkenstein and Lusen are surrounded by extensive outdoor enclosures containing typical mountain forest species, including the brown bear, wolves and lynx as well as wild horses and aurochs.

The plant outdoor enclosure with its rock garden, surrounding the Hans-Eisenmann-Haus, showcases the much of the flora of the Bavarian Forest with its 700 species. This is also where the world's largest barrier-free tree-top trail, at 1,200 meters, established in 2009, ends with a 44 meter high viewing platform.

The trail winds through the unspoilt forest across the adventure path 'Seelensteig' (to be reached by 'Igelbus'). First-time guests to the National Park should first visit the National Park Centres Lusen and the Hans-Eisenmann-Haus in Neuschönau, or the National Park Centre in Falkenstein with its 'Haus zur Wildnis' near Ludwigsthal. Both offer free admission for individual tours, forest exhibitions, even 3D slide shows and adventure rooms for children.

A week in the National Park

Monday: Hans-Eisenmann-Haus, plant and rocks outdoor area, treetop trail, followed by walk (7 km, 4.3 miles) through the animal outdoor enclosures.

Tuesday: Hiking tour in the historical cross-border forest hiking region. A detour to the Moldauquelle source of the famous Vltava has recently been shortened by an additional cross-border hiking trail to a round trip.

Wednesday: Via the adventure path 'Hochwaldsteig' and the Jacob's ladder, we ascend the Lusen with its tree-free summit at 1,373 meters, which is covered by thousands of granite blocks.

Thursday: Today we visit the new National Park Centre Falkenstein, including the 'Haus zur Wildnis', and the animal outdoor enclosure including the stone-age cave and the jungle adventure path Watzlikhain near Zwieslerwaldhaus.

Friday: Climb the highest mountain in the National Park, the 'Grosser Rachel' (1,453 meters), starting out at the Racheldiensthütte.

Saturday: A day just for the children, visit to the forest play area with its unique nature adventure path where you can play and learn to understand nature.

General information

Facts and figures

Location: Between Bayerisch Eisenstein and Mauth, on the Czech border

Area: 243 square kilometres

Altitude: 600 to 1,453 meters (Großer Rachel)

Established: 1970

Landscape types: Alluvial spruce forest, mixed alpine forest, mountain spruce forest

Books and maps

Wanderkarte Bayerischer Wald

Zwischen Rachel und Lusen
ISBN 3-86116-059-5 und

Zwieseler Winkel
ISBN 3-86116-120-6

Bayerischer Wald – Wo Wildnis erwacht
ISBN 3-924044-57-0

Waldwildnis grenzenlos
ISBN 3-935719-37-X

National Park Information

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Freyunger Straße 2
94481 Grafenau
Tel. 08552 9600-0, Fax -100
poststelle@npv-bw.bayern.de
www.nationalpark-bayerischer-wald.de

Information on barrier-free offers for the National Park is available here.

Visitor centres:

Hans-Eisenmann-Haus
Böhmstraße 35
94556 Neuschönau
Tel. 08558 9615-0, Fax -22

Haus zur Wildnis Ludwigsthal
94227 Lindberg
Tel. 0992 5002-0, Fax -167

Accommodation

National Park Partners
www.nationalpark-partner.de

Zweckverband der Nationalparkgemeinden
Tel. 08558 91021

Werbegemeinschaft Zwieseler Winkel
Tel. 09922 4347

Fremdenverkehrsgemeinschaft Grafenau
Tel. 08558 973807

*Touristinformationen Ferienland
am Nationalpark Bayerischer Wald*
Tel. 08551 57114

How to get there

By train:

From Plattling (ICE Station) to Zwiesel, Bayerisch Eisenstein, Grafenau, Frauenau or Spiegelau. From there, take the bus using the Bayerwald ticket.

By car:

Falkenstein-Rachel area: A 92 from Munich and A 3 from Regensburg or Passau: exit Deggendorf, B 11 to Regen, Zwiesel and Bayerisch Eisenstein. For Rachel-Lusen area: A 3 exit Hengersberg, on B 533 to Grafenau, Neuschönau or Spiegelau.

Barrier-free visit

In the National Park and its information facilities, parking areas, passenger lifts, ramps, or stair lifts, washrooms, toilets, etc. for the disabled are provided. Activities for disabled are also provided. Information about barrier-free offers are available in the service building next to the parking lot in Ludwigsthal, in the Nationalparkwacht building (National Park Guards' building) at the parking lot in Neuschönau or from the visitor counters in the information centres and at the information points.



Berchtesgaden National Park





The east wall of the Watzmann, rising to incredible heights behind the little church, is awe-inspiring. Up here, at a height of 2,713 meters, 'man is not the measure of all things'. The baroque rooftops with the two turrets stand small and fragile in the middle of the magnificent landscape panorama provided by nature. The view of the pilgrimage chapel of St Bartholomew on the western shore of the Königssee has become one of the most iconic views of Germany.

The magnificent backdrop of the Berchtesgaden National Park acts as a 70-million year old geography lesson for its visitors. Here you will find all the climate and vegetation zones, from the mid-latitudes to the Arctic Circle, all in one small space.

Visitors can plunge into wild nature on nearly 230 kilometres of well-developed hiking trails and alpine paths. Visitors have the choice: from a 20-minute walk to the 'Malerwinkel' (painter's corner) to an extended high-mountain tour for experienced mountaineers. In addition to the Königssee, which is popular with tourists, the vast territory offers countless, unforgettable impressions: wild, romantic valleys such as the Wimbachtal with its massive debris flows, or the lonely Funtensee hiding in a high mountain valley, causing regular headlines in winter with its extreme temperatures below zero as Germany's cold spot. Many rustic, alpine lodges with catering facilities in the summer offer an opportunity to stop for a bite to eat on nearly all hiking tours.

The high mountains of the Berchtesgaden National Park are characterised by an exceptional variety of habitats: The rare Edelweiss grows on lean turf and hard-to-reach crevices. The white felty hair of the plant keeps evaporation as low as possible in intense sunshine and wind.

The National Park is also home to different types of gentian: The stemless gentian with its blue, lock-shaped flowers can be found from the valleys up to the alpine meadows. The roots of the dotted

and the Hungarian gentian are used for making strong spirits. The spring gentian, with its bright blue, star-shaped flowers is also called 'Schusternagel' (shoemaker's nail), by the locals.

The sycamores are up to 600 years old and 40 metres high. Their bark is smooth, grey-yellow, and often covered in ferns, mosses or lichen. Together with spruce, fir and beech, it forms the natural mixed alpine forest.

Red deer and mountain goats are native to the highlands. The cute marmots, which live in family groups, are mainly observed in the areas of Jenner, Gotzen and Wasseralm and at the Funtensee. In the Kahlersberg/Teufelshörner region, the largest alpine ibex population (about 120 animals) can be found in the border area between Austria and Germany. These rare climbers are not hunted, and hence have little fear of humans. However, to be close to them, you will have to pay in sweat: The climb takes hours. You can, however, watch the golden eagle from the valley, which is much more relaxing. A total of four pairs breed in the protected area. The National Park team is currently offering free guided walks throughout the year in the 'Valley of the Eagles'.

A day in the National Park

In summer, the day begins with a hike to the Königsbachalmen – always ‘on the trail of the marmot’. On the sunny alpine meadows, visitors can watch the cute alpine inhabitants with binoculars. A rustic snack at the mountain hut rounds off the programme. The National Park has also thought of those looking for the iconic Almrausch (rhododendron hirsutum), Edelweiss, etc. Under the expert guidance of the ranger, fans of these plants will discover these botanical wonders here in Germany’s only alpine National Park. In winter, a visit to the National Park Information Office Hintersee is a great idea. After a tour of the woodpecker exhibition, you can continue on foot or by horse-drawn carriage to observe the feeding of the red deer. With a little bit of luck you can observe around 60 red deer and doe with their calves.

A week in the National Park

Sunday: On foot, the trail leads through the impressive, thunderous Wimbachklamm to the Wimbachtal with its mighty debris flow, the famous ‘Gries’.

Monday: Jenner cable car ride. The peak of the Jenner offers a magnificent view of the Königssee and large parts of the National Park.

Tuesday: The Alm adventure bus takes us through the Klausbachtal up to the Hirschbichlpass. The gentle descent passes the Bindalm at the National Park Information Office Engert, the new spectacular suspension bridge, and ends with a visit to the National Park Information Office Hintersee with its nature experience area.

Wednesday: Rest. Today a visit of the centre for the history of the Third Reich at the Obersalzberg is planned. This is followed (optional) by a bus ride to the mountain restaurant Kehlsteinhaus – the former Nazi regime symbol of power.

Thursday: A cruise on the Königssee, with its world-famous echo, with the environmentally friendly, battery-operated boat. The detour will take us to the National Park Information Office on St Bartholomew. Hike to the Eiskapelle (Ice Chapel) at the foot of the Watzmann east wall.

Friday: Visit of the National Park House in Berchtesgaden and a trip to the festival city of Salzburg.

Saturday: Extend your stay and hike a few days through the so-called ‘Steinerne Meer’ (Sea of Rocks) and stay overnight in the mountain huts.



General information

Facts and figures

Location: Southeast of Bavaria bordering Austria

Area: 210 square kilometres

Altitude: 603 (Königssee) to 2,713 meters (Watzmann)

Established: 1978

Landscape types: Deciduous, mixed alpine and coniferous mountain forests, mountain pine shrubs, mountain pastures, alpine meadows and dwarf shrub heath, rock vegetation, bogs, streams and lakes

Books and maps

Im Augenblick der Zeitlosigkeit
Michael Vogel (text), Marika Hildebrandt (photos)
ISBN 978-3940141415

Die Pflanzenwelt des Nationalparks Berchtesgaden
ISBN 3-925647-33-3

Die Tierwelt des Nationalparks Berchtesgaden
ISBN 3-925647-42-2

Geologie der Berchtesgadener Berge
ISBN 3-925647-27-9

Nationalpark Berchtesgaden
Topographic map (1:25.000)
ISBN 3-86038-093-1

National Park Information

Nationalpark-Haus Berchtesgaden
Franziskanerplatz 7
83471 Berchtesgaden
Tel. 08652 64343, Fax 69434
nationalparkhaus@npv-bgd.bayern.de
www.nationalpark-berchtesgaden.bayern.de

Accommodation

Berchtesgadener Land Tourismus GmbH
Tel. 08652 65650-0, Fax -99
www.berchtesgadener-land.com

With a bit of luck you may encounter the golden eagle when hiking in the Berchtesgaden National Park.



How to get there

By train:
Route to Berchtesgaden Terminus Munich – Berchtesgaden. From there, continue with the RVO service buses.

By car:
Munich – Salzburg, exit Bad Reichenhall, motorway B 20 direction Berchtesgaden.

Barrier-free visit

The Berchtesgaden National Park offers numerous activities, such as barrier-free guided tours. In addition, some of the hiking trails in the National Park are suitable for wheelchair users. Further information is available from the Nationalpark-Haus Berchtesgaden.

Vertical wilderness in the Berchtesgaden National Park: A difference of 2,300 metres are between the top of the Watzmann and the bottom of the Königssee.

Nationalpark
Berchtesgaden





Eifel National Park

Experience the fascination
of wilderness in a landscape
of forest and water.

Majestic beeches, gnarled oak trees and wild streams. The Eifel National Park offers the visitor a diverse landscape: steep valleys, vast forests, rivers and streams run through the park as if it were a model railway landscape. The rivers Rur and Urft mould the landscape. Attractive long-distance views from the open grasslands of the Dreiborner plateau, the former military training area Vogelsang, impress just as the wild daffodils do, which transform the valley meadows in the south each spring into a yellow sea of flowers. Here, the natural beech and mixed oak forests are under special protection. Wildcats quietly sneak through the forests at dusk. Tracks in the snow give away the presence of the shy 'little Eifel tigers'.



In the Eifel National Park, the mixed deciduous forests that grow on the nutrient-poor soils and are influenced by the Atlantic climate are protected. Watercourses run through the medium-high mountain range resembling an extensive network of veins, a complex organism. The Rur and its numerous tributaries have carved deeply their way through the sloping forested uplands which have been dominant the landscape for many thousand years. In addition to the rugged cliffs, natural deciduous forests and species-rich meadows, there are also large lakes in this protected area.

400 million years ago, a shallow sea containing large quantities of clay sediments stretched over today's National Park. During the period of the Late Carboniferous – about 300 million years ago – these sedimentary layers folded and pushed up to become the so-called 'Variscan Mountains'. As a result of the high pressure, mudstone turned into slate, which can commonly be found in the Eifel region.

Researchers have found and documented several thousand animal and plant species here – have a look on the digital species list in the Internet. Over 1,000 species are on the Red List which means that they are endangered or even threatened with extinction. The wild cat, the 'little Eifel tiger', is the most famous resident of the richly-structured beech forests. Around 50 of them live in this protected areas. The National Park has one of the largest herds of red deer, about 1,000 of them. Also,

beavers, eagle owls and river pearl mussel live here, as well as the extremely rare black stork.

The popular viewpoint 'Hirschley' in Kermeter is a popular destination for many visitors. The hiking trails in the recently established nature experience park 'Wilder Kermeter' is barrier-free all the way from the parking area to the Kermeter. A short serpentine with a low slope leads to the view point, where a tactile bronze model of the National Park and the river dam stands.

So that everybody can find their own way, the hiking trails are provided with a barrier-free guidance and information system. Additionally, ample seating, a weather-proof roof, barrier-free washrooms and toilets as well as barrier-free bus station are provided. Boat round trips are a very popular option, to gain first impressions of the future National Park wilderness. A ranger accompanies the boat trip on the first and third Monday from April until October. In total, the Eifel National Park rangers offer eight different guided tours per week throughout the year at no charge and with no registration being required.



The Wilderness Trail is a true challenge, bringing 85 km (53 miles) of all types of landscapes the Eifel National Park has to offer, here the Urftsee.

A day in the National Park

The best way to start your trip into the National Park is to visit one of the five information offices, the National Park Gates, with their themed exhibitions. At the National Park Gate Heimbach, for example, you enter a walk-in audio presentation, where you can discover exciting secrets about the beech forest. All offices offer film screenings, some showing the 'Little Eifel Tiger'. The Gates are the starting point for many tours guided by rangers and hikes with forest guides, also offered in Dutch, French and in German sign language. In addition, the National Park event calendar offers family days, wilderness camps, carriage rides and much more.

A week in the National Park

Saturday: Visit the National Park Gate in Simmerath-Rurberg. Thereafter, enjoy the scenery on a boat or canoe trip on the Rursee.

Sunday: Participate in a guided tour of the former NS 'Ordensburg' Vogelsang. This is followed by free ranger tour or barrier-free carriage ride to the deserted medieval town of Wollseifen.

Monday: Visit the National Park Gate in Schleiden-Gemünd. Cycle tour along the Urftsee to the historic Urft dam. Refreshment point after about 11 kilometres (7 miles).

Tuesday: Visit the National Park Gate and the Water Information Centre Eifel in Heimbach. Then hike through natural beech forests to the abbey Mariawald. We recommend: pea soup followed by cheesecake.

Wednesday: Visit the exhibition at the National Park Gate Nideggen or Monschau-Höfen. Thereafter, there is an excursion to the neighbouring old towns.

Thursday: Discover Eifel nature and history in the Nature Adventure Village Nettersheim. The Nature Centre offers exhibitions and adventure trails for geological and ecological diversity of the region.

Friday: Hike on one of the sign-posted themed tours in the Eifel National Park. Thereafter, you can experience the animals in the game reserves of the region close up.

General information

The National Park dedicated
to the wild cat.

Facts and figures

Location: About an hour's drive away from Cologne, Bonn and Aachen on the German-Belgian border

Area: 108 square kilometres

Established: 2004

Landscape types: Extensive deciduous forests characterised by beech trees and sessile oaks, ravine forests, open areas with cliffs, quarries, bogs and heaths, brook valleys with riverside forests and wild daffodils

Books and maps

Hiking Map

Eifel National Park
Eifelverein (publisher)
ISBN 978-3-921805-78-7

Hiking Guide

ThemenTouren Nationalpark Eifel
ISBN 978-3-7616-2068-7

*Der Wildnis-Trail im Nationalpark Eifel –
4 Tagesetappen zwischen 18 und 25 km*
ISBN 978-3-7616-2154-7 and
ISBN 978-3-7616-2010-6

Tier- und Pflanzenwelt im Nationalpark Eifel
J.P. Bachem-Verlag
ISBN 978-3-7616-2005-2

National Park Information

Landesbetrieb Wald und Holz NRW
Nationalparkforstamt Eifel
Urfstseestraße 34
53937 Schleiden-Gemünd
Tel. 02444 9510-0, Fax -85
info@nationalpark-eifel.de
www.nationalpark-eifel.de

Points of contact for visitors are the five National Park Gates with exciting exhibitions and tourist information.



Accommodation

Restaurants, hotels, guest houses and other accommodation catering for National Park visitors can be found at www.nationalparkgastgeber.eu.

How to get there

By train:

Station Kall (DB route Cologne-Trier) or the Rurtalbahn from Düren to Heimbach. Continue with the National Park Shuttle and other bus lines.

By car:

To reach the National Park region from Cologne, take the A 1 motorway (exit Euskirchen-Wißkirchen), from Aachen take the B 258, from Düren take the B 56, B 265 and from Koblenz take the A 61. A guiding system will direct you to the National Park Gates.

Barrier-free visit

Guided tours are offered in sign language, rangers and forest guides are appropriately trained, the barrier-free Nature Adventure terrain 'Wilder Kermeter', barrier-free information offices, carriage rides and National Park hosts ensure that the Park is accessible to and can be experienced by all.

Nationalpark
Eifel



A large, gnarled tree trunk is the central focus of the image, set against a misty, blue-tinted forest background. The tree's bark is deeply textured and shows signs of age and weathering. The branches are thick and curve outwards, some ending in smaller, more delicate twigs. The overall atmosphere is serene and somewhat ethereal due to the fog and the monochromatic color palette.

Hainich
National Park



It takes a bit of courage to climb one of the two hanging bridges. However, once that queasy feeling is overcome, one gently sways with the movement of the beech branches on the swinging, but completely safe, rope construction 25 metres high. The tree-top walkway allows for a most intense encounter with nature in the 'jungle in the middle of Germany'. Located in the triangle of the towns of Eisenach, Mühlhausen and Bad Langensalza, the vast forests of Hainich form the largest continuous deciduous forest in Germany, nearly devoid of conifers and completely unmanaged in the National Park.

The habitat in the 'upper storey' of the forest is very diverse and still not fully understood. The tree tops, out of the reach of humans, are full of life: On a tree-top tour you come across animals that are normally quite inaccessible – such as woodpeckers, the highly specialised Purple Emperor or the Bechstein bat.

Rest areas invite you to stop and admire. Through art and nature, knowledge and games, adventurous heights and tangible proximity the visit to the tree-top trail becomes a uniquely exciting experience of nature.

The barrier-free trail experiences of Silberhorn, Brunstal and Feensteig are also included in the environmental educational concept of the protected area. These very popular trails are surprise routes with lots of 'experience stops' rather than educational trails with long and boring information plaques.

It is the wealth of tree species of the Hainich National Park that sets it apart from other forests. The Hainich is a muschelkalk mountain range of which the highest altitude is the Alte Berg with a height of almost 500 metres. Here one can find beech, ash, maple, linden and the rare Wild Service tree (*sorbus torminalis*) with its small, round red-brown fruits.

The species diversity of the rest of the plants and the animals is just as impressive. Wildcats, forest bats and various woodpecker species make their home here. Much less conspicuous are many of the 1,650 currently listed fungi species represented here – more than 200 of these fungi are on the German Red List.

The forest is particularly spectacular in spring when the floor is covered in early flowers or when the various tree species parade their autumn colours.

In accordance with the German National Park motto of 'let nature be nature', around 91% of the park surface is set aside not to be exploited.

In particular, the pristine beech forests in Germany have been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Hainich National Park is one of the five German protected areas where these precious beech forests are seen as an extension of the existing (since 2007) World Heritage Site 'Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians'.



In spring the floor of the beech forest is covered with carpets of flowers such as the larkspur.

A day in the National Park

Start with a morning visit to the National Park Centre at the Thiemsburg at Bad Langensalza. The exhibition 'Discover the mysteries of Hainich' invites you to observe, to be informed about and to understand the National Park from different perspectives. Visitors encounter wildcats, centipedes and badgers. The 500 metres tree-top trail leads to the crown of the forest from where one has a good vantage point for observing forest bats and woodpeckers. Departing from Thiemsburg, ways of spending the day include embarking on a hike on the Steinberg Trail (10 km, 6.2 miles) or on the Thiemsburg Nature Trail (4 km, 2.5 miles).

A week in the National Park

Monday: Start with a visit to the National Park Centre at the Thiemsburg and continue on the tree-top trail or the Steinberg Trail.

Tuesday: The 'Wildkatzenpfad' (Wildcat Trail) between Bad Langensalza and Eisenach starts at the parking area in Hütscheroda. Continue with a visit to Eisenach, the town of Luther and Bach, in particular the Cultural World Heritage Site Wartburg.

Wednesday: Visit the Natural History Museum in the state capital Erfurt or the Friedenstein Castle in the royal seat of Gotha.

Thursday: National Park Information Centre 'Am Harsberg' near Lauterbach. Pass the tree houses of the youth hostel 'Urwald Life Camp' on the Bummelkuppen Trail.

Friday: The Brunstal Experience Trail, adapted for partially-sighted and physically-challenged visitors, starts at the fox farm at Mülverstedt. The afternoon can be spent in Mühlhausen, the 'Town of Towers', and the Volkenroda Convent with its 'Christuspavillon'.

Saturday: Start off in Mihla with a canoe on the Werra and continue by bicycle in the Werra Valley through the Eichsfeld-Hainich-Werratal Nature Park.

Sunday: The last day of the week starts with a visit to the National Park Information Centre in Kammerforst and ends with a beautiful hike on the Betteleichen Trail, starting at the Zollgarten parking area.

General information

Facts and figures

Location: In Western Thuringia, in the Eisenach, Mühlhausen and Bad Langensalza triangle

Area: 75 square km

Altitude: 220 – 500 m

Established: 1997

Landscape types: Species-rich and structurally mixed beech forest with a high percentage of dead wood, large new forest areas

Books and maps

Freizeitkarte Nationalpark Hainich plus Erlebnispfade
ISBN 3-932071-05-0

Urwald mitten in Deutschland
Available from National Park Information Offices

Tree-top trail – here you can climb to the roof of the primeval forest.



National Park Information

Nationalparkverwaltung Hainich
Bei der Marktkirche 9
99947 Bad Langensalza
Tel. 03603 3907-0, Fax -20
np_hainich@forst.thueringen.de
www.nationalpark-hainich.de

Nationalparkzentrum und Baumkronenpfad (tree-top trail)
Tel. 03603 892159, Fax 891343
info@reko-uh.de

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Accommodation

Hainichland, Tourismusverband der Thüringer Nationalparkregion
Tel. 036022 980836, Fax 980837
info@hainichland.de
www.hainichland.de

How to get there

By train:
Eisenach, Mühlhausen and Bad Langensalza stations, from there continue with the regional bus service.

By car:
Take the motorway A 4, from the Eisenach Ost exit along Highway B 84 to Bad Langensalza and Mihla, or from the Gotha exit along B 247 to Bad Langensalza.

Barrier-free visit

The Brunstal Experience Trail in the Park was conceived with wheelchairs in mind. There is a system that guides blind and partially-sighted visitors from one information stop to the next. All information is also available in Braille. More information can be obtained from the National Park Offices.

Nationalpark
Hainich





Harz National Park



This can be an inhospitable place, wrapped in mist for 300 days of the year, with an annual average temperature of 3.1 degrees Celsius. Swept by storms of 200 kilometres per hour and more, the 'Nordic' vegetation clings to its granite base. However, it is also a magical place. The perfect setting for the Walpurgis Night witches sabbath and surreal impressions: glittering winter landscapes covered in thick snow projecting peculiar shapes and forms.

As the northerly of the medium-height range, the 1,141 m high Brocken Mountain, the highest spot in the National Park, braves the stormy weather year in and year out. The climate is comparable to that of alpine regions of 2,000 m and higher. The Brocken Mountain is the highest point in northern Germany and also the highlight of every visit to the National Park.

It can be approached on many trails from the directions of Schierke, Torfhaus or Bad Harzburg/Ilseburg, or on the famous Harzburg narrow-gauge rail route. The exhibition at the Brockenhaus at the Brockenkuppe in the immediate proximity of Brockenwirt and Sendemast offers deep insights and wide views. More than 1,800 mountain plant species from all over the world can be seen at the Brockengarten, established in 1890.

The Brocken, surrounded by many legends, is part of a romantically harsh landscape, formed by steep mountain ranges, plateaus, cliffs, valleys and gorges. Different altitudes are found in close proximity to each other, from hill country to the Brockenkuppe – the crest of the Brocken – the only summit in the mountain range bordered by a natural forest.

Every altitude provides different living conditions, resulting in a rich variety of fauna and flora. Mountain spruces dominate the higher altitudes. Here one can also find rocks, boulder heaps, moors and clear mountain streams, with dippers and water shrews frequenting their banks. In the lower-lying beech forest, home of black woodpeckers and black storks, wildcats stalk their prey. The ravine forests are too damp for beech: Here alder, ash and mountain elm overshadow an herbaceous layer where alpine coltsfoot and moon violets thrive. The mixed beech/spruce forest is home to the wood grouse, and the rare Tengmalm's Owl can be found

in abandoned tree hollows. The lynx has returned to the Harz, and red deer, roe deer and wild boar have to be on the lookout for their old enemy again. This is also one of the last remaining habitats of the large wildcat. The Harz moors, up to seven meters thick in places, has been largely conserved – peat harvesting has proved too difficult here. The raw climate contributed to the creation of these waterlogged areas, formed after the last Ice Age through a combination of cool, damp conditions and impermeable subsoil. Moor creation was also assisted by the fact that dead plants decomposed only partially. Especially dead peat moss developed into thick moor substance. Bulging flatlands point to a high moor, where cotton grass grows.

The Harz National Park is one of the largest protected forest areas in Germany – with targeted, but careful interventions the existing cultivated forests has been helped to return to their natural state. By 2022, 75 % of the National Park area will be left untouched.

The changes that the bark beetle has wrought in the spruce monoculture are easy to see, but the diversity of life that is re-establishing itself in the dead wood, without human intervention, is also obvious. The 'Borkenkäferpfad' (Bark Beetle Trail) at Ilseburg, with its information points explains to the visitor why the 'catastrophe' of the bark beetle is also a great opportunity for nature.

The 'Löwenzahn-Entdeckerpfad' (Dandelion Explorer Trail) winds close to the Brockenbahn narrow-gauge rail station in Drei Annen Hohne. On the way to the mountain it is worthwhile making a detour to the Brocken primeval forest: On the 'Urwaldstieg' (Primeval Forest Trail) you can experience how a forest can live and perish at the same time.



Sunrise at the Hirtensteig (Shepherd's Trail) – a steep climb to the Brocken from here.

A day in the National Park

Follow in Goethe's footsteps, climbing up the Magic Mountain of the Germans: The hiking trail from the Torfhaus up to the Brocken takes about two hours to complete. Find out beforehand at the Visitors' Centre about the route along the Harz moors and the pristine mountain spruce forests. At the top of the Brocken the Brockenhaus offers an extensive and modern National Park exhibition. A guided walk with a park ranger along the Brocken Hiking Trail will open your eyes to new insights and views. The neighbouring Brockengarten (Brocken garden) exhibits more than 1,800 mountain plant species from all over the world. The flowering season is from middle May to middle October, during which time daily guided tours are available.

A week in the National Park

Monday: Family programme: Get to know the 'Löwenzahn' (Dandelion) Adventure Trail in Drei Annen Hohne. Continue with the child friendly pack horses Max and Eros to the National Park.

Tuesday: A walk with a park ranger, leaving from the National Park Centre in Ilsetal the footsteps of the great German poets and writers, Goethe and Heine.

Wednesday: Seven Moors Tour: hike with ranger through the high moors around the Torfhaus.

Thursday: Morning visit to the lynx outdoor enclosure at the Rabenklippe (Raven Stone). Evening 'Bat Tracking'.

Friday: From Bad Harzburg station with the natural gas bus to forest guesthouse Molkenhaus. With the deer track to the wildlife observations hide.

Saturday: Cliff hopping 'pure nature' to the Leistenklippen on the Hohnekamm crest.

Sunday: (in autumn) art exhibition 'Natur-Mensch' (Man and Nature) in Sankt Andreasberg.

General information

Facts and figures

Location: Central part of the Harz medium-height mountain range, situated in the federal states of Lower Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt

Area: 247 square km

Altitude: 230 to 1,141 metres (Brocken)

Established: 1990 (Saxony-Anhalt) and 1994 Lower Saxony, joined together in 2006

Landscape types: Mountain spruce-, mixed mountain- and beech forests, sub-alpine dwarf shrub land, moors, running water and rock biotopes

Books and maps

Brochures, e.g. 'Nationalpark Harz– Sagenum-wobene Bergwildnis' or the annual nature experience programme are available from the National Park Centre, from the National Park Authorities or as Internet download. A wide selection of books and maps are also available from the National Park Centres.

National Park Information

Nationalparkverwaltung Harz
Lindenallee 35
38855 Wernigerode
Tel. 03943 5502-0, Fax -37
poststelle@nationalpark-harz.de
www.nationalpark-harz.de

Brockenhaus
Tel. 039455 5000-5, Fax -6

Nationalpark-Besucherzentrum Torfhaus
Tel. 05320 33179-0, Fax-19

Nationalparkhaus Sankt Andreasberg
Tel. 05582 9230-74, Fax -71

Haus der Natur, Bad Harzburg
Tel. 05322 7843-37, Fax -39

Accommodation

Harzer Tourismusverband
Tel. 05321 3404-0, Fax -66
info@harzinfo.de
www.harzinfo.de

Holidays with National Park Partners
www.nationalpark-harz-partner.de

Discover nature with
a park ranger.



How to get there

By train:

From the north to Bad Harzburg or Wernigerode, from the south to Herzberg or Bad Lauterberg. Continue by bus (information at www.fahrtziel-nature.de) or the narrow-gauge steam train (www.hsb-wr.de).

By car:

Take the B 6 (Goslar-Bad Harzburg-Wernigerode), B 81 (Halberstadt-Wernigerode), B 27/B 243 (Osterode-Herzberg-Bad Lauterberg-Braunlage) or B 4/B 242 (Braunlage).

Barrier-free visit

The National Park offers barrier-free access on the narrow-gauge train with a visit to the Brockenhaus, and also on the hiking trail with a view on the Brocken at Torfhaus. Further information is available from the National Park Authorities, at the National Park Centres or at www.nationalpark-harz.de.

Nationalpark
Harz





Jasmund
National Park



Verdant beech forests, white chalk cliffs and the blue sea – the Jasmund peninsula on Rügen is one of the famous landscapes that characterise Germany. Casper David Friedrich's painting of the chalk cliffs are an icon of German Romanticism and it is this which we associate with the Rügen coast with today.

The brilliant-white cliffs are made from 70-million year old chalk, constructed by nature from the skeletons of the countless single-cell organisms that the Cretaceous sea once left behind. The highest and most famous point of the chalk coast is the Königsstuhl that towers 188 metres above the beach. At its foot, where the clicking of flint pebbles marks the wave movement of the Baltic, rival pretenders to the Germanic throne once competed with each other. Equipped only with a knife, they had to climb this cliff. The one who succeeded first was crowned king at the top.

The high-water mark trail between Sassnitz and Lohme offers a series of surprising views. From the Königsstuhl a trail leads through the shady forest, with its awe-inspiring tree veterans and deeply cut-out stream beds, to the still and mysterious Hertha Lake. Although logging activities only ceased here a few years ago, the area already has the pristine look of original growth. Jasmund is the smallest National Park in Germany. The chalk cliffs were not the only reason for establishing it: The astonishing

diversity of habitats in a small geographical space was another. The Stubnitz beech forest, together with its more than 100 moors, lakes, springs and streams, also belongs to the National Park, as does the shallow water area of the Baltic in front of the chalk cliffs.

The pristine beech forests in Germany have been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Jasmund National Park is one of the five German protected areas where these precious beech forests are seen as an extension of the existing (since 2007) World Heritage Site 'Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians'.



The moors in the Stubnitz have always been perceived as romantic and inspired the imagination.

A day in the National Park

Hiking along the chalk coast, especially in the morning at sunrise, is an unforgettable experience. The trail leads from Sassnitz over the rocky shore, under the steeply rising cliffs to the 188 m towering Königsstuhl. At the top a visit to the National Park Center provides a very special insight into the Park – an experience for all ages. Before returning to Sassnitz by bus, a worthwhile detour to the mysterious Hertha Lake is recommended. Should you prefer to return on foot, then hike along the high-water mark to Sassnitz, through shady beech forest, where new and fresh views on the chalk coast and the Baltic Sea present themselves.

A week in the National Park

Saturday: Accommodation in one of the Sassnitz guest houses, built in the style of the famous Baltic 'Bäder' architecture, with views on the Prorer Wiek. Freshly-caught fish for supper.

Sunday: Visit the coast with a park ranger to look for fossils such as 'thunderbolts' and Hühnergötter (chicken idols) flints with small holes for threading, a symbol of health and success.

Monday: Hike with a ranger from the Hagen parking area to the Königsstuhl. Visit the National Park Centre at Königsstuhl, for surprising insights into the natural environment – inspiring the desire to experience more.

Tuesday: A trip on the steamer along the coast to the Königsstuhl and back, with lots of information about Jasmund and Rügen. Round off the day with a hearty fish lunch in a Sassnitz harbour pub, and a stroll through the old part of the town.

Wednesday: A high point of the holiday is the hike at sunrise from Sassnitz on the beach under the chalk cliffs to Königsstuhl and back along the high watermark trail.

Thursday: Explore the Jasmund peninsula by bicycle. Visit the Cretaceous Museum at Gumannz and experience the view over the expanses of Rügen from the Tempelberg Bobbin.

Friday: In the morning, another sunrise trip, on your own, to the chalk coast.

General information

Facts and figures

Location: Jasmund peninsula on the Baltic Sea island Rügen

Area: 30 square kilometres

Altitude: – 10 to + 161 m (Piekberg)

Established: 1990

Landscape types: Chalk cliffs, rocky beach, shallow water areas of the Baltic, beech forest, lakes, moors, streams

Books and maps

Rolf Reinicke
Die Kreideküste
Verlag Delius Klasing
ISBN 978-3-7688-1905-3

Rad- und Wanderkarte Rügen
(Cycling and hiking map of Rügen)
1:50.000
Maiwald-Karten, Studio-Verlag
ISBN 978-3-932115-26-4

National Park Information

Nationalparkamt Vorpommern
Im Forst 5
18375 Born
Tel. 038234 502-0, Fax -24
poststelle@npa-vp.mvnet.de
www.nationalpark-jasmund.de

Außenstelle Nationalpark Jasmund
Stubbenkammer 2 a
18546 Sassnitz
Tel. 038392 350-11, Fax -54

Nationalpark-Zentrum Königsstuhl GmbH
Tel. 038392 6617-0, Fax -40
info@koenigsstuhl.com
www.koenigsstuhl.com

Accommodation

Tourismuszentrale Rügen
Tel. 03838 80770, Fax 254440
info@ruegen.de
www.ruegen.de

How to get there

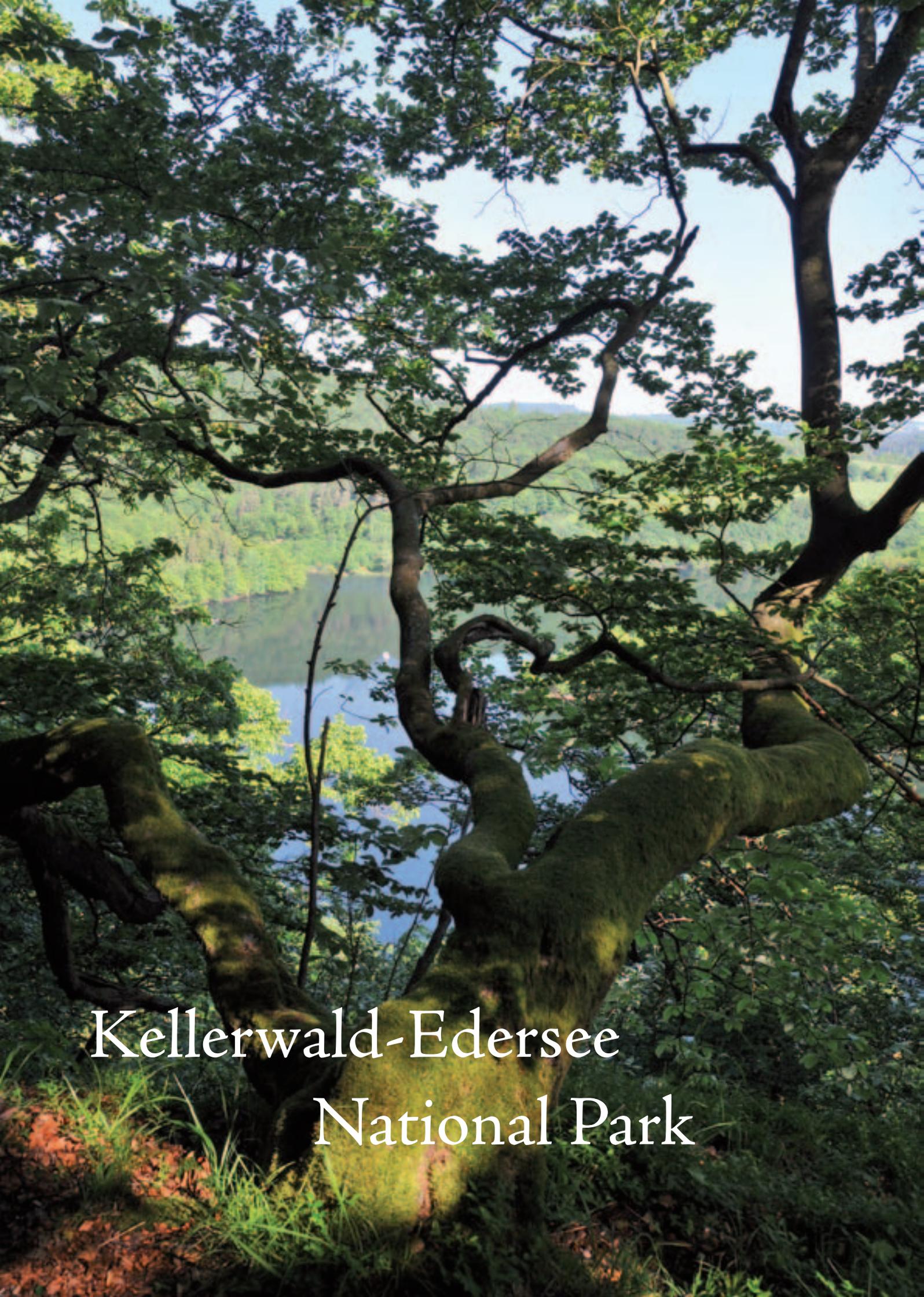
By train:
Over Stralsund and Bergen to Sassnitz, bus lines 14, 20, and 23 to Stubbenkammer.

By car:
A 20 to exit Stralsund, B 96 Stralsund over Bergen to Sassnitz. Bus from Hagen parking area to Königsstuhl.

Barrier-free visit

The National Park Centre Königsstuhl is, like all the attractions in the outlying areas, adapted for wheelchairs. The only exception is the Königsstuhl itself. The bus from the Hagen parking area is suitable for wheelchairs. For blind visitors, the leaflet 'Nationalpark Jasmund, Kreidefelsen am Meer' (Jasmund National Park, Chalk Cliffs by the Sea) is available in Braille.



A large, gnarled tree trunk covered in vibrant green moss dominates the foreground. The tree's branches spread out, framing a view of a calm lake in the distance. The background shows rolling green hills under a clear blue sky. The overall scene is lush and serene, capturing a natural landscape in a national park.

Kellerwald-Edersee
National Park



One of the last great and pristine beech woods of Central Europe is included in the protected area of the Kellerwald-Edersee National Park. The recurring ebb and flow of the forested mountains and hills provide this green landscape with its tranquil, fluid rhythm and are reminiscent of a billowing sea of beeches. Ancient, gnarled beeches, mossy roots, bizarre rocky outcrops and clear springs are dotted around the trails, while the glittering blue of the Edersee Lake shimmers through the treetops, with enduring clarity.

The Kellerwald forests, which date back to ancient times, are truly something special. The forest area extends over more than 1,000 hectares, with its beech woods which are over 160 years old and even more than two centuries in other parts. Here you find the largest undivided special beechwood complex (Luzulo-Fagetum) in Central Europe and the only National Park in Hesse. In addition, there are four other beechwoods. They are included on the list of UNESCO as a World Heritage Site 'Ancient beech forests of Germany'.

There are easily 500 or more springs in the National Park. Also characteristic of the relief-rich landscape are the rocky vegetation and steep slopes, as well as beautiful valleys of forests and meadows. The wildcat has resurfaced in the Kellerwald after more than 60 years. The forest is also home to all species native to Hesse. At night, bats – including the greater mouse-eared and Bechstein's varieties – can be seen leaving their daytime hideaways in crevices and hollows to hunt for insects. Rare beetle species and fungi settle on dying trees and rotting wood, helping them decompose. Black and red kite circle over the treetops, while the black stork and eagle owl have returned to the quiet forests. The rare freshwater flatworm, which can be considered a relic of the Ice Age, populates healthy springs and is – just like the Dunkers freshwater snail – a sign of exceptional water quality.

A total of 540 plant species grow in the National Park. These include, among others, the white woodrush and the St Bernard's lily. As well as beeches, hikers can encounter mountain ash, oak, lime, maple and occasional conifers. To date 383 fungi varieties, 258 moss and 280 lichen varieties have been identified. Nature lovers can combine a half-day hiking tour with a boat ride on the

Edersee or a journey with the E.on cable car to the Peters Kopf. Day tours allow visitors to escape deeply into the 'magic realm of ancient beeches'. Not to be missed is the Urwaldsteig (Primeval Forest Trail) which runs for approximately 70 kilometres around the Edersee. Weird and wonderful tree shapes will lead hikers on the Wooghölle on mazy meanders over hill and dale, deep into the world of goblins and gnomes. The picturesque bay of Banfebucht offers an unforgettable nature experience, not unlike the fjords of Scandinavia.

A section of the Hagenstein path offers families with pushchairs and wheelchairs a barrier-free trail and a memorable excursion into the growing wilderness. The Ochsenwurzelskopf route goes as far as the high reservoir on the Peterskopf, giving visitors a wonderful view of the Edersee and the Waldeck castle. On the steep slopes of the Bloßenberg, those keen on plants may enjoy an early summer experience: The great Hesse state collection of Cheddar Pink 'fire witch', endangered throughout Europe, is found in the Kellerwald-Edersee National Park, while the Quernst Chapel offers an oasis of calm.

Those wishing to discover the 'magic realm of ancient beeches' with the help of a guide are welcome to join one of the many ranger tours. Adventure and information is offered in abundance, whether on foot, by bicycle, a covered wagon and even at night. The futuristic National Park Centre at Kellerwald at Vöhl-Herzhausen uses its experience exhibition to cover the topic of 'wilderness' from unusual perspectives. In the WildtierPark, meanwhile, visitors can experience domestic animals at close range.



The Kellerwald-Edersee National Park offers many beautiful hiking trails, for example the Urwaldsteig (Primeval Forest Trail) Edersee.

A day in the National Park

The tour starts in Edertal-Hemfurth with a trip on the E.ON cable car to the high reservoir on Peterskopf. From there, it continues downhill over the Urwaldsteig and through extensive old beech woods to Sauermilchplatz and Förstergrab. The hike continues around Daudenberg, known for its most varied forest habitats as well as tree slopes. Finally, stop at Bringhausen and onto a boat across the Edersee enjoying a return to where it all started. The landscape and the forested mountains just hiked through look almost fjord-like from the water.

On three Sundays a year, the Kellerwald-Edersee National Park celebrates: National Park Festival, the Heideblütefest (Moorland Blossom Festival) and the Herbstmarkt (Autumn Market).

A week in the National Park

Monday: Visit to the National Park Centre of Kellerwald – one of the most innovative exhibition buildings – covering the topic of ‘Nature and wilderness’ with 4D SinneKino (4D senses cinema), fine food and the National Park shop. This is followed by a hike on the Hagenstein route and back via the wild Brückengrundsteig.

Tuesday: The Edersee cycle tour offers the whole family romantic views of the Edersee and centuries-old forests.

Wednesday: Hike, e.g. on the Heideerlebnis (heathland adventure) path at Altenlotheim with unspoilt grassland, heath and juniper.

Thursday: On the well-marked Urwaldsteig Edersee hiking path walkers will come across oaks and rocks, beech shrubs and the world of mythical creatures.

Friday: Culture is priority today. The tour takes us to the Cistercian monastery of Haina, to the ‘Stamfort Gardens’ Landscape Park and onto the Tischbein hiking trail.

Saturday: A relaxing boat ride on the Edersee awaits – from the dam up to Herzhausen and back.

Sunday: A trip with the cable car from Edertal-Hemfurth to the high reservoir. On a clear day, those on board can enjoy fantastic views as far as Willingen and Kassel. A trail then leads hikers to Edertal-Kleinern and over the Kleiner’sche Gate to Hemfurth.

General information

Facts and figures

Location: Northern Hesse, south of the Edersee

Area: 57 square kilometres

Altitude: 200 to 626 meters above sea level

Established: 2004

Landscape types: Acid soil beech forest (Luzulo-Fagetum), hardwood, block- and deciduous forest, pristine oak forest

Books and maps

Cycling and walking maps for Kellerwald-Edersee
Scale 1:35.000, KKV

Available at regional Information Centres

Urwaldsteig Edersee – Wanderführer
Edersee Touristik GmbH (Publ.), 2008,
cognitio Verlag

*Nationalpark Kellerwald-Edersee –
Das Buchenbuch*
80 pages, English / German

National Park Information

Nationalparkamt Kellerwald Edersee
Laustraße 8
34537 Bad Wildungen
Tel. 05621 75249-0, Fax -19
info@nationalpark-kellerwaldersee.de
www.nationalpark-kellerwald-edersee.de

NationalparkZentrum Kellerwald
Weg zur Wildnis 1
34516 Vöhl-Herzhausen
Tel. 05635 992781
www.NationalparkZentrum-Kellerwald.de

Accommodation

Holidays with National Park Partners
www.nationalpark-kellerwald-edersee.de

Tourist service
www.waldecker-land.de
www.edersee.com

BuchenHaus am WildtierPark Edersee
Am Bericher Holz 1
34549 Edertal-Hemfurth
Tel. 05623 97303-0
www.nationalpark-kellerwald-edersee.de

How to get there

By bus and rail:

By bus or rail to Bad Wildungen, Korbach or Frankenberg. From there, buses also run into the National Park areas, to the Buchen Haus, the WildtierPark or the National Park Centre. The bus services provided by the Nordhessischer Verkehrsverbunds NVV are also complemented by the regional bus company BKW. Additionally, a convenient shared-taxi service is available.

By car:

- From the north-west: on the A 44, Diemelstadt exit
- From the north: on the A 49 towards Marburg, Fritzlar exit
- From the east and south: on the A 7 – Homberg exit (Efze)
- From Marburg: on the B 3 towards Kassel, then on the B 62 or B 252 Frankenberg exit
- From Biedenkopf: on the B 253 to Korbach
- From Willingen: on the B 251 to Korbach

Barrier-free visit

A wildlife watching and photography vantage point at Altenlotheim includes a ground level ramp to accommodate wheelchair users wanting to enjoy the view. The way up also includes a wheelchair lane. The hiking trail from the Himmelsbreite parking area to Hagenstein has been tested by a wheelchair user and declared suitable for wheelchair use (although we recommend an escort). The National Park Office is also freely accessible for wheelchair users, as is the National Park Centre with exhibition, cinema and dining room. Barrier-free Internet access has been installed. Upcoming concepts of a wilderness school and the wild animal park of Edersee are also targeting maximum possible barrier-free access.





Müritz-
National Park



The viewing platform on top of the 55 metre high Käflingsberg tower near the small settlement of Speck guarantees a fantastic vista. Here you can enjoy views not only of the three Speck lakes down below but, on a clear day, as far as Müritz. At the highest point in the National Park, nature displays a superb show of its abundance.

The Müritz National Park alone is home to 107 bodies of water, collectively covering more than a hectare. It also includes the Havel headwaters, the upper reaches reminiscent of a string of pearls. The springs of the Müritz National Park are often entire lakes – or marshy areas like those found at Havel, where the ground water comes to the surface. The water of the boggy ponds and forest lakes tends to be brown in colour due to the high content of humic substances.

The Müritz National Park is part of the Mecklenburg Lake District which, with 53 residents per square kilometre, is very sparsely inhabited. A strip of the eastern bank of the Müritz, 500 metres wide and 10 kilometres long, is part of the protected area. This includes large areas of pine woods, which are characterised by new forest areas. The beech forests in the Serrahn district are particularly special. This was the former hunting ground of the Mecklenburg-Strelitzer Grand Dukes. Here, visitors can come face to face with a unique forest wilderness. An application to include the Serrahn Beech Forest together with the beech forests of Jasmund, Kellerwald-Edersee and Hainich in the prestigious list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites has been accepted and they are now seen as a worthy extension of the famous Carpathian virgin beech forests, already an established World Heritage Site.

In September and October, the eastern bank of the Müritz is home to the red deer for the rutting season. Thirteen species of bats find ideal living conditions in old and dying trees, bogs, lakes, meadows and old walls. An exhibition on small mammals is hosted in the National Park Information Centre at Kratzeburg. In September, Kratzeburg also offers evening excursions to view nocturnal hunters.

With a bat detector the ultrasound calls of bats can be heard by all. The Müritz National Park is not only famous for rare large birds such as the osprey, white-tailed sea eagle, crane or great bittern, but also for the variety of its bird life. Around 250 species can be found there.

The flora is unique: The reed beds here are not formed by the common reed but by a rare species of the swamp sedge, the saw grass, forming the biggest area of saw grass in Germany. In summer, attractive white woollen hair decorates the bogs. In some areas of the water, the large round leaves of the white water lily cover the surface like a carpet, while the hilly landscape of forests and lakes is at its most charming in the late autumn weeks.

A variety of visitor facilities, some barrier-free, ensure exciting insights into nature. The extensive network of cycling and hiking paths stretching some 650 kilometres; this includes observation towers, observation platforms, footbridges, viewing stations and nature trails. The National Park Information Centres also provide key first-hand knowledge with their exhibitions. Even water sports are catered for in the Müritz National Park – with canoeing allowed in some areas of water.

The National Park ticket is ideal for more extensive tours. Some of the buses in the area cover routes which are off-limits to private cars. A particularly good offer is the combination with a boat ride on the Müritz. The boats shuttle regularly between Waren (Müritz), Klink, Röbel/Müritz and the Bolter Canal and, like the buses, also welcome bicycles on board.

A day in the National Park

10.00 a.m.: Bus trip with the National Park bus to Waren (Müritz), Steinmole.

10.35 a.m.: Arrival at Speck in the middle of the National Park.

11.00 a.m.: An exciting guided tour with a National Park ranger around Speck.

12.35 p.m.: Bus trip with the National Park bus to Boek.

1.00 p.m.: Lunch in Boek, followed by a visit to the National Park Information Centre and the National Park shop.

4.00 p.m.: Bus trip with the National Park bus to the Bolter canal and the shipping pier.

4.40 p.m.: Leisurely cruise on the Müritz to Waren (Müritz).

6.05 p.m.: Arrival at the picturesque town of Waren (Müritz).

A week in the National Park

Monday: Discover the landscape with the National Park ticket from Waren (Müritz) by bus, guided tour and ship.

Tuesday: Rent a bicycle or go by National Park bus to Schwarzenhof. There, enjoy an exhibition, followed by a cycle tour across the moor. Climb the Käflingsberg tower.

Wednesday: Cycling through the countryside of forests, meadow and lakes in a southerly direction towards Waren (Müritz). Lunch break in Müritzhof.

Thursday: To the museum and get to know Heinrich Schliemann, who discovered ancient Troy, then to Ankershagen, before finally hiking to the Havel spring lakes.

Friday: Rent a canoe in Dalmsdorf or Granzin for a Havel tour.

Saturday: Something quite special – enjoy a secret nature trail through untouched beech forests and moorland between Zinow and Serrahn.

Sunday: Hike from Goldenbaum through landscape formed during the Ice Age and spot the beavers. Picnic at the halfway point in Steinmühle on the Grünower Lake.



General information

Facts and figures

Location: Mecklenburg Lake District, between Berlin and Rostock

Area: 322 square kilometres

Altitude: 62 (Müritz) up to 143 metres (Hirschberg)

Established: 1990

Landscape types: Lakes, reed beds, bogs and moorland, forests, meadows

Books and maps

*Rad- und Wanderkarte
(Cycling and hiking map)
Müritz National Park*

1:50.000

ISBN 978-3-940175-01-4

*Im Land der Tausend Seen
Wandern im Müritz-Nationalpark
Unterwegs mit der Familie
Vögel beobachten
Fischadler im Müritz-Nationalpark
DVD 'Farbklang Wildnis'*

Available at all National Park Information Centres

National Park Information

*Nationalparkamt Müritz
Schloßplatz 3
17237 Hohenzieritz
Tel. 039824 252-0, Fax -50
poststelle@npa-mueritz.mvnet.de
www.mueritz-nationalpark.de
www.mueritz-nationalpark-partner.de*

*National Park Service
Tel. 03991 668849, Fax -94
www.nationalpark-service.de*

Accommodation

*Tourismusverband Mecklenburgische Seenplatte
Tel. 039931 538-0, Fax -29
www.mecklenburgische-seenplatte.de
info@mecklenburgische-seenplatte.de*

How to get there

By rail:

Waren (Müritz) and Neustrelitz stations on the Berlin-Rostock line, continue with the Müritz National Park ticket lines or regular rail service.

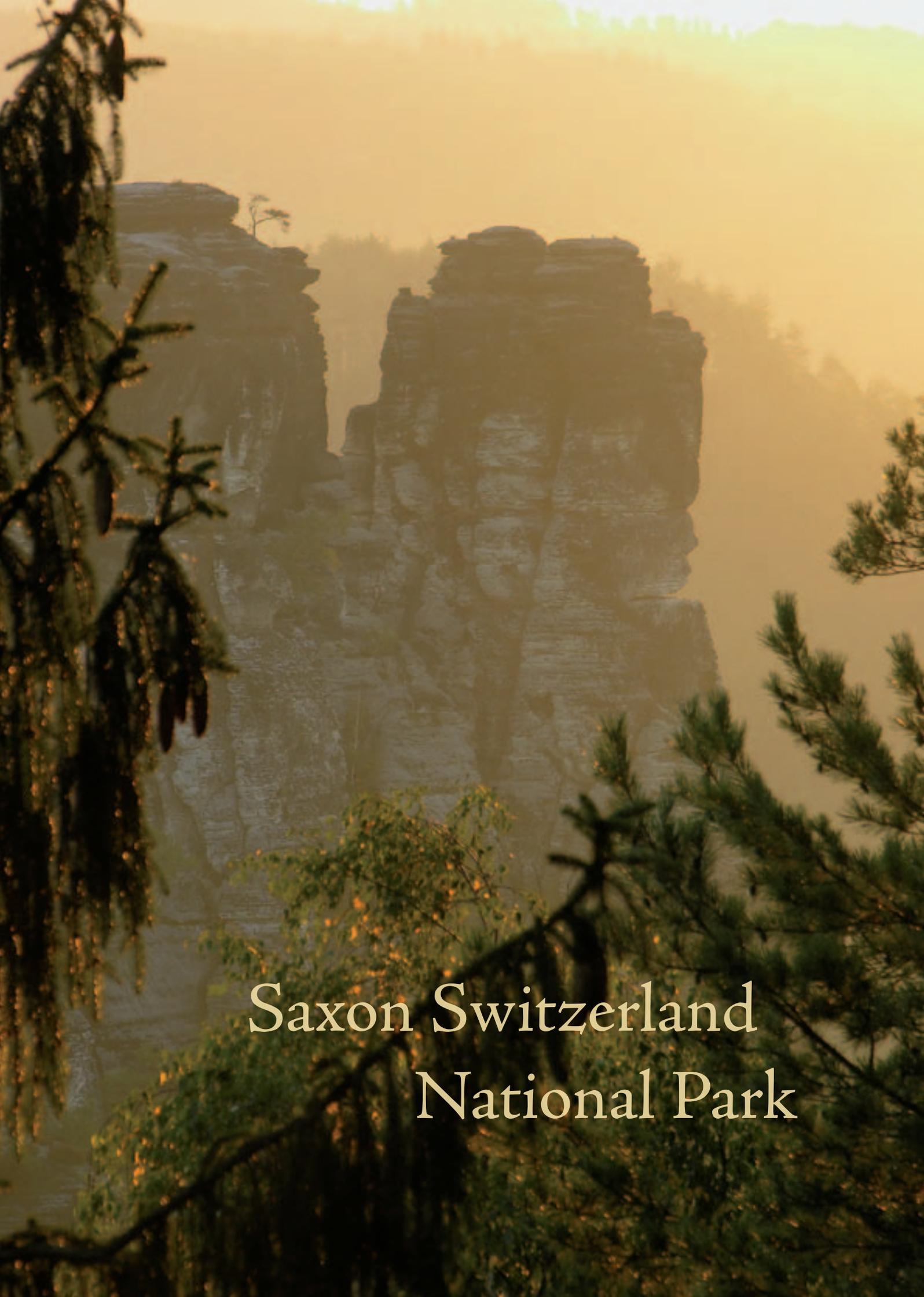
By car:

Motorways A 24 and A 19 from Berlin to Rostock up to the Röbel / Müritz or Waren (Müritz) exit, motorway A 20 towards Friedland.

Barrier-free visit

Barrier-free observation posts, hiking trails and adventure trails. For further information, please contact the National Park Office in Müritz or see www.muertz-nationalpark.de





Saxon Switzerland
National Park



'Rocks are frozen music' – there could be no more apt words to describe the world of the Elbe Sandstone Mountains than this quote from Pythagoras dating back 2,500 years. Rugged towering rock and sturdy plateaus are interspersed with attractive flatter areas, staggering shapes and gorges. In the middle of this rocky kingdom, the Elbe has carved its way deeply into the sandstone. It winds its way majestically around the Lilienstein, the king of the summit plateaus. The mystical impression is intensified considerably with the knowledge that here some things are 'upside down'. In summer, the gorges have a humid and cool climate – ideal for plants and animals alike. The mountain peaks, on the other hand, are warm and dry and attract residents who would otherwise give the summits a miss.

Talking about 'Elbe Sandstone Mountains' or 'Saxon-Bohemian Switzerland' is really missing the point. What we are dealing with here is actually a sea bed where the water dried up a hundred million years ago. Over time, the Elbe and its tributaries carved the bizarre rock formations visible today out of the stone. These are havens for plants and animals, some of which live under very specific conditions. This also applies to the yellow sulphur lichen or the wild cucumber, also called clasp-leaf twisted stalk, which is otherwise found only in mountains. Many animals that are overwhelmingly shy also find areas to retreat to in isolated spots of the National Park. These include fish otters, black storks, eagle owls and, as migrants, the shy lynx.

Hardly any other mountain range boasts such a combination of wildlife and beauty in such close proximity. Here, the altitude varies by up to 450 metres. The area also includes diverse forests – with scattered odd-shaped pines on the rock spires and towers, darkness at ground level with high spruces, and hillsides of original beeches.

It is a romantic mountain range that was discovered by tourists around 200 years back and for the past 130 years by climbers from Saxony. There is also a long tradition of conservation here. As far back as 130 years or more, there were calls for limitations on sandstone mining and successful appeals against the construction of mountain railways to the Bastei and Lilienstein.

The network of trails ranges from pleasant hiking paths to steep mountain trails with stairways

and ladders right up to the rock plateaus. Visitors can choose between distant views and deep and dark gorge trails as well as sleepy villages on both sides of the German-Czech border. The rock bastion called Bastei – a rocky outcrop near Rathen – is probably the most famous natural monument of Saxon Switzerland. The 305 metre high pulpit rock looms imperiously 194 metres over the Elbe and offers an incredible view of the landscapes. From numerous additional viewpoints, visitors can enjoy a panorama opening out and including all the major table mountains (e.g. Lilienstein, Königstein), the Schrammstein range, the Großer Winterberg and other noteworthy rock formations for viewing and climbing, right up to those in Bohemia.

'Schrammsteine' is the name given to a heavily rugged rocky range east of Bad Schandau. A formidable vertical incision forms the Schrammtor. The various rock forms reflect millions of years of ongoing weathering. Further east, at Hinterhermsdorf within the National Park, Königsplatz offers an expansive vista over the tranquil mountains of the Bohemian Switzerland National Park. There is a very close working relationship between both National Parks. Hinterhermsdorf, a family-friendly place that was chosen as the most beautiful village in Germany in 2001, offers the perfect starting point for practically limitless hiking, thanks to its numerous accommodation options. Also worth considering is a trip from Schmilka on the Elbe to the neighbouring National Park at the Prebischtor, the largest sandstone rock gate in Europe.

Even more mystical in the early morning: view from the Bastei to the 'Kleine Gans'



Hikers are enveloped by the unspoilt nature of the Kirnitzschklamm gorge at the point where the Saxon and Bohemian Switzerland National Parks meet.

A day in the National Park

In the morning, a walk from the Bastei parking area via the Bastei viewpoint and the famous bridge into the valley towards the health resort Rathen and through the Amselgrund and Schwedenlöcher and uphill back to the Bastei parking area. Duration: about three hours.

The rock bastion of the Bastei is the most famous and impressive Elbe sandstone viewpoint, looming high over the Elbe River. Regardless of the crowds, the path over the Bastei Bridge remains breathtaking. The adventurous trail through the cool Schwedenlöcher canyon takes you within touching distance of the vertical sandstone walls of the National Park. Returning to the Bastei plateau, the National Park gallery showcases 300 historical pictures and prints in the Schweizer Haus, reflecting the varied perceptions of nature since the era of Romanticism. To round off the day, the National Park Centre in Bad Schandau boasts a modern visitor centre with expansive exhibition spaces, multimedia and interactive models.

A week in the National Park

Monday: Guided hike with the National Park ranger into the Hinterhermsdorf gorge and boat trip on the Kirnitzsch River.

Tuesday: Visit the Bastei and Schwedenlöcher as well as the National Park Information Point at Amselallbaude.

Wednesday: Visit the National Park Centre in Bad Schandau before hiking to the Lilienstein.

Thursday: Rest day with a stroll through the historical old town of Pirna and plenty of fun in the 'Toskanatherme' thermal baths in Bad Schandau.

Friday: A trip with the National Park Express to the Bohemian Switzerland National Park, followed by a walk to Prebischtor.

Saturday: A hike over the Schrammsteine to the historical Großer Winterberg mountain guesthouse with the National Park Information Office and then back to Schmilka.

General information

Facts and figures

Location: East of Dresden on the Czech border, on the upper reaches of the Elbe in Saxony

Area: 93 square kilometres

Altitude: 110 (Elbe) to 556 metres (Großer Winterberg)

Established: 1990

Landscapes: Sandstone rocks, pine forests, ravine forests, wooded knolls of beeches on basalt

Books and maps

Nationalparkregion Sächsisch-Böhmische Schweiz
Topographical map
1 : 25.000 with accompanying
National Park booklet
ISBN 978-3-89679-361-4

Elbsandsteingebirge – Landschaft im Meer geboren
Geology hikes
ISBN 93342-34-6

Der historische Malerweg. Auf den Spuren der Maler
ISBN 3-929048-25-6

National Park Information

Staatsbetrieb Sachsenforst
Nationalparkverwaltung Sächsische Schweiz
An der Elbe 4
01814 Bad Schandau
Tel. 035022 900-600, Fax -666
Poststelle.NLPA@smul.sachsen.de
www.nationalpark-saechsische-schweiz.de

The National Park Centre is open daily from February to December, except on Mondays (Please reserve group visits in advance, 035022-50240).

Accommodation

Tourismusverband Sächsische Schweiz e. V.
Bahnhofstraße 21
01796 Pirna
Tel. 03501 470-147, Fax -148
info@saechsische-schweiz.de
www.saechsische-schweiz.de
(also National Park Offices)

How to get there

By rail:

Via Dresden to Bad Schandau (IC line Berlin – Prague, S-Bahn) or via Neustadt/Saxony – Sebnitz.

By car:

Highway A17 Dresden towards Prague, Pirna exit, then via B172 towards Bad Schandau or S164/S165 towards Hohnstein.

Barrier-free visit

Rail, steamer and Elbe ferry stations offer wheelchair-accessible stopping points within the National Park and also a special taxi service. For further information, please contact the National Park Centre.



Go by steamer and experience history as well as nature in all its beauty.

Nationalpark
Sächsische Schweiz



A scenic view of a misty river in a forest. The foreground is dominated by tall, green grasses and several pink, umbel-shaped flowers. The river is calm, reflecting the surrounding trees and the light sky. The background is a dense forest of green trees, partially obscured by a light mist. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and serene.

Lower Oder Valley
National Park



The Lower Oder Valley in the northern part of Brandenburg is one of the last remaining pristine flood plains of Central Europe and is Germany's only alluvial National Park.

The National Park forms the only large transboundary protected area with Poland. This National Park – 10,400 hectares in size and stretching almost 53 kilometres from north to south – is characterised by its rich bird life.

Three to five kilometres wide and 60 kilometres long, the flood plain of the Lower Oder Valley snakes its way along the German-Polish border. In winter and especially in spring, after the thaw, the river wells up with great force and subsequently overflow to cover the vast expanses of meadows and alluvial forests.

200 kilometres of trails are perfect for extended cycle trips through the Oder flood plain and in the adjacent forests and areas of dry grassland. Abundant viewing pleasures also await nature lovers from the river dikes. This area is home to ospreys, cranes and white and black storks. Here you can also find spring-breeding lapwings, curlews, redshanks and snipes. The Lower Oder Valley boasts the largest breeding ground in Germany for the corncrake, and this is the only place where the globally threatened aquatic warbler rears its young. Further highlights include the extensive dry grasslands on the Oder hills with such illustrious species as the star gentian, various orchids like the tridentate orchid and military orchid, or the soft meadow grass well-known from steppe areas. In May and June, it shows itself flowering in all colours imaginable.

In summer, marsh and water plants bloom in the many branches of the Oder oxbow lakes. At night, the Oder flood plain comes alive with thousands of water and marsh frogs creating a truly and their deafening crescendo, interspersed with the cries of the spotted and little crane. Autumn sees huge flocks of birds sweep through the valley enveloped in thick fog. The Oder Valley is currently home to over 100,000 ducks, geese and swans as well as up to 15,000 cranes. The wide expanse of river also features noiseless drift ice on cold winter days. The flooded and frozen plains portray an image of an endless white expanse, with the silence unbroken, except for the singing of the whooper swans, a very unique melodic yet melancholy winter symphony.

The carcasses of dead wild boar or deer provide food for many of the ospreys gather round whilst the open bodies of water provide rich pickings for these hungry predators which come here from all over Germany and Northern Poland to the Oder.

To the north-east, the Polish Landscape Park borders the Lower Oder valley (Lower Odra Valley Landscape Park) and touches the National Park. Here, over 6,000 hectares include extensive flood and percolation mires. The shift in terms of agricultural use after the Second World War is what characterises this area, where natural development has flourished for over sixty years. To the south-east is the Zehden Landscape Park (Cedynia Landscape Park). This protected area is special because of its large forested areas with tranquil lakes, where wolves regularly roam. Along with the two other landscape parks mentioned, the National Park collectively forms the international Lower Oder Valley park, a German-Polish protected area with a total area of around 120,000 hectares.

A bi-national protection scheme which works, since the Lower Oder Valley area is still home today to almost one in six of the plants on the Red List of the Federal Republic of Germany and almost half the Red List varieties of the state of Brandenburg. With 50 mammals, eleven amphibians and six reptiles as well as 49 species of fish, the Oder flood plain is a significant retreat for rare vertebrates. Prominent fish fauna include not only the catfish and sea trout, but also smaller varieties like spined loach and Bitterling. The river lamprey which is hard to spot nowadays, and sturgeon, thought to have died out more than a century ago, have been found swimming in the Oder. Since 1994, a resettlement project has been underway, the scope of which included in 2007 an initially experimental stocking of young sturgeon into the Oder.

From the heights of Zaton Dolna (Nieder-saathen) to the Polish bank of the Oder, a magnificent view unfolds: a green and pleasant land enfolding a web of silvery-blue ribbons.



Marshes, riverside woodlands and oxbow lakes adorn the Oder flood plain.

A day in the National Park

A visit to the National Park House in Criewen should be all you need to orient yourself. The exhibition is also fun, allowing all the family to join in and interact. Main attractions here are the twelve metre long aquarium with over 25 native fish species and a multimedia experience, transporting visitors through time to the wilderness of 2095. After a lunch of regional dishes, we continue the nature theme with a discovery tour in the Oder flood plain.

A week in the National Park

Monday: National Park House in Criewen, enjoy the nature spring trail.

Tuesday: Bike excursion into the Polish Zehden Landscape Park (Cedynia Landscape Park).

Wednesday: A visit to the lovingly and attentively furnished tobacco museum and the tobacco barns in Vierraden. Followed by town fortifications and the St Stephen's Church in Gartz. Highlight of the day could be the wonderful panoramic view from the Meschrin Seeberg.

Thursday: Hike through the mixed forest in Garzer Schrey, bird trip into the wilderness area of the northern flood detention basins, visit to the 'Seeschwalbe' observation hut.

Friday: In the morning, we are off to the Gut Kerkow's farmers' market. After a bite to eat, we will take a cycle tour to the medieval keep in Stolpe (option to go up the tower) and then onwards to Schwedt.

Saturday: The day is spent cruising on the Oder – from Schwedt. In the evening you can try traditional Uckermark dishes.

Sunday: The week ends with a guided morning nature hike looking at the 'awakening of wilderness'.

General information

Guided canoe
trips open up new
perspectives.

Facts and figures

Location: Oder Valley between Szczecin and Cedynia, on the Polish border in Brandenburg

Area: 104 square kilometres

Altitude: 0 to 50 metres (Meschrin Seeberg)

Established: 1995

Landscape types: Landscape of flood plains with marsh areas, sedge, original reeds, backwaters, riverside (alluvial) forests, deciduous forests and short grass steppe

Books and maps

Nationalpark Unteres Odertal
Karte 1:50.000 State Surveying Office

Deutsche Nationalparks – Der National Geographic Traveler (2009)
ISBN 978-3-86690-102-5

National Park Information

Nationalpark Unteres Odertal
Park 2
16303 Schwedt/Oder, OT Criewen
Tel. 03332 26772-0, Fax -220
www.nationalpark-unteres-odertal.eu

National Park House in Criewen
Tel. 03332 26772-44

Accommodation

Tourismusverein
Nationalpark Unteres Odertal e. V.
Vierradener Straße 34
16303 Schwedt/Oder
Tel. 03332 255-90, Fax -59
www.unteres-odertal.de



How to get there

By rail:

From Berlin via Angermünde to Schwedt (RE 3), continue the journey by town bus to Criewen.

By car:

From the Berlin motorway A 11 towards Szczecin then take the Joachimsthal exit, main road B 198 and B 2 up to Schwedt/Oder.

Enjoy a barrier-free visit

The asphalted dike tops on the Oder are perfect for wheelchair outings. The exhibition spaces in the National Park House are also equipped for barrier-free access – also the use of computers, microscopes and models. Please contact the National Park for more information.

Nationalpark
Unteres Odertal



Western Pomerania
Lagoon Area
National Park





The Bodden landscape of saltwater lakes and lagoons is one of transitions – land and water flowing into one another in an intricate web: sometimes connected to each other by wide spaces, at other times abruptly separated by sudden borderlines. New shapes are continually created by the forces of nature. This National Park obtains its unique characteristics, among other things, from the Darß-Zingst chain of saltwater lakes, separated from the Baltic Sea by the peninsula of the same name, and the saltwater lakes in Western Rügen, their barrier to the Baltic formed by the island Hiddensee. This is the Bodden landscape, the lagoon area of the Baltic. This fascinating landscape – formed by mud flats, sandbar and spits, changing cliff shapes, pristine beaches, sensitive virgin land and pristine forests – has excited both artists and pleasure-seekers for more than a hundred years.

The shallow-water areas of the Baltic constitute approximately half of the surface of the park, and 39 fish species are to be found there. At the bottom of the sea mussels, mud snails and countless other invertebrates provide food for waders and water birds. For the long-tailed duck, for example, the waters of the Baltic Sea are an indispensable winter haven. Thousands of water birds are often found resting in the shallows north of Darß and Zingst.

The Bodden habitat differs from the Baltic Sea in that its waters are less salty, show weaker tides and a significantly higher nutritional content. Transitional areas, ranging from completely covered by water to completely dry, depending on wind direction and force, are called wind flats. Here we can find an abundance of food for waders like avocets and sanderlings, and during low tide the shallows provide a safe resting place for thousands of cranes.

People are welcome as guests of nature. Whether on Darß, Hiddensee, Zingst, in Barhöft or on the west coast of Rügen, park rangers are always available to provide information and guidance. Guided tours are offered throughout the year. Rangers also staff the bird hides during the crane migration in autumn.

From the Darßer Ort lighthouse one can let one's gaze wander over the constantly evolving and ever-changing landscape, having almost a bird's eye view over the top of the Darß Forest, the characteristic linear structures of ridges and reefs, long coastal dunes interspersed with marshes and alder

swamps. On clear days the view extends to Rostock and even to Denmark. The neighbouring Natureum, a satellite of the German Maritime Museum at Stralsund, provides information about the natural history of the Darßer Ort Biosphere, including its fauna, and also about the Baltic coastline and the coastal dynamics of Darßer Ort.

A special kind of Darß tour from Born explores an exhibition in the 'Alte Oberförsterei' (Old Chief Forester's Ground). In this exhibition, organised by the National Park, the visitor moves 'virtually' from coast to coast, crosses through pristine forest and eventually arrives at the Bodden shore, where one can even observe life under water.

Many tourists head for Hiddensee, which can only be reached by boat. This car-free island can be explored on foot, by bicycle or horse-drawn carriage. The southern part of the island descends gradually into water, while in the north the so-called Dornbusch reaches a height of 72 m. The bright beam of the white lighthouse is visible from far away. Back in Vitte the beautifully slanted roof of the National Park building comes into view. Here an exhibition about change ('Veränderungen') hopes to encourage visit to think about the many issues concerning humans and nature and offers possibilities of finding answers to these questions.



A unique beauty –
the Bodden landscape
with its multi-textured
shores

A day in the National Park

Whether you are staying on Darß, on Zingst, around Barhöft, on the western coast of Rügen or on Hiddensee, you have a good view of the West Pomeranian Lagoon District. Directions are given from main routes into the area, which can then be explored on foot or bicycle. Depending on where you overnight, you may be surrounded by coastal cliffs on the Baltic Sea or the beginning of wilderness area, experience diverse open spaces or magical forests.

Hides do not merely provide a good vantage point from which to view the landscape. They also allow you to observe the many different birds without disturbing them. More than 200 bird species are found in the National Park which is of great importance for millions of migratory birds – amongst them ducks and cranes. Guided tours led by rangers are highly recommended.

A week in the National Park

Saturday: Stay within the idyllic setting of the Bodden landscape, best with a 'Partner of the Western Pomerania Lagoon Area'. Explore the region, dine on fresh fish.

Sunday: Sleep in, rent a bicycle after breakfast, ride to the beach and swim in the Baltic Sea.

Monday: Visit the Darßer Ark in Wieck, continue on a hike along a waymarked trail through the Darß Forest to the pristine West Beach.

Tuesday: Cycle tour through Sund Meadow to Pramort, ending up in Zingst. Catch a bicycle-friendly bus back, and sample fresh fish for dinner.

Wednesday: On a rainy day, visit the amber museum (Bernsteinmuseum) in Ribnitz-Damgarten, followed by the Bird Park in Marlow. View the art gallery in Ahrenshoop on the way back.

Thursday: Tour of the National Park with a ranger, ride on a carriage and observe the wildlife, organ concert in the evening.

Friday: Day trip by boat to Hiddensee to enjoy the unique landscape. The day often ends with a spectacular sunset.

General information

Facts and figures

Location: Darß-Zingst peninsula, Baltic Sea island Hiddensee and western coast of the island Rügen

Surface: 786 square metres

Altitude: –10m to +72m (Dornbusch on Hiddensee)

Established: 1990

Landscape types: Gradual and steep coastline, beaches, mud flats, dunes, meadows, grassland, reed beds, salt marsh lagoons, pine and beech forests, alder wetlands

Books and maps

Leaflets, brochures at all National Park Information Points and on order from central administration; tourist information stands in local wellness centres and tourism institutions organisations.

National Park Information

Nationalparkamt Vorpommern
Im Forst 5
18375 Born
Tel. 038234 502-0, Fax -24
poststelle@npa-vp.mvnet.de
www.nationalpark-vorpommersche-boddenlandschaft.de

Nationalparkhaus Hiddensee
Tel. 038300 680-41, Fax -43
np-haus-hidd@npa-vp.mvnet.de

Accommodation

Tourismusverband Fischland-Darß-Zingst e. V.
Tel. 038324-6400, Fax -64034
info@tv-fdz.de
www.fischland-darss-zingst.de

How to get there

By train:

To the Richland/Darß/Zingst peninsula, travel to Ribnitz-Damgarten station, Bus A 210; to west Rügen and Hiddensee travel to Bergen/Rügen station, Bus A 402 or A 410, ferry to Hiddensee from Charade.

By car:

Motorway A 19 to the Rostock-Ost turn-off, highway B 105 to Altheide (Darß), Löbnitz (Zingst) or Stralsund; highway B 96 to Samtens or Gingst (West Rügen) or to Schaprode (Hiddensee) or Motorway A 20 to the Bad Sülze exit (Fischland/Darß/Zingst peninsula) or Stralsund turn-off (Rügen/Hiddensee islands)

Barrier-free visit

Some paths in the park are wheelchair-friendly. The Darßer Ark in Wieck, the park exhibitions at Sund Meadow, in Waase on Ummanz, the administration building on Hiddensee as well as the observation tower south east of Zingst are barrier-free.



An aerial photograph of a wadden sea landscape, showing a series of rolling dunes. The dunes are covered in a mix of green vegetation and brownish sand, creating a textured, undulating surface. The lighting is bright, casting soft shadows that emphasize the contours of the dunes. The overall color palette is dominated by various shades of green and brown, with a clear blue sky visible at the top.

National Parks

Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea

Hamburg Wadden Sea

Lower Saxony Wadden Sea

Nationalpark
Wattenmeer



SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN

Nationalpark
Hamburgisches Wattenmeer



Nationalpark
Wattenmeer



NIEDERSACHSEN

Our coastal Wadden Sea is unique, as this tidal landscape is not found anywhere else in the world. Apart from the mud flats, which are flooded and laid dry by changing tides, dunes, salt marshes, sandbanks, tide-ways and the bordering marine areas also form part of the Wadden Sea biome. In Germany this special environment is conserved by three National Parks. The uniqueness of the biome was emphasised once again when, in 2009, UNESCO designated the German-Dutch Wadden Sea as World Heritage Site. This status places the Wadden Sea on the same level as the Australian Great Barrier Reef, the Ecuadorian Galapagos Islands or the Serengeti Reserve in Tanzania.

55

The Wadden Sea constitutes a magnificent landscape of superlatives: the highest concentration of birdlife in Europe, the largest conservation area between Sicily and the North Cape with around 10,000 species, 250 of them endemic. The Wadden Sea is home to seals, sea lions and harbour porpoises and a nursery for North Sea fish species like plaice, herring and sole.

The mud flats are home to vast numbers and hugely diverse life forms. Just look at the ground: blow lugs, king rag, mussels, sandhoppers and crabs occupy the apparently lifeless surface of the mud flats. These invertebrates provide the basis of life for birds, fish, seals and eventually humans on the North Sea coast.

The mud flats were formed after the last Ice Age. Melting glaciers caused sea levels to rise and brought layer-forming sediment along at the same time.

Salt marshes are a typical feature of mud flats or Wadden. They originate in the transitional area between sea and land when sediment layers are high enough. Countless insects, spiders, shrimps and worms live in the salt marshes, many of them highly specialised and feeding on a single plant species. The plants are also specialists, of which the violet-blooming sea lavender is a prime example. It has special glands that secrete salt to prevent damage to its cells. In all three National Parks it is possible to experience pristine wilderness, unusual in this day and age.

On guided mud flat tours one discovers the little 'stars': the mudworm, which eats up to 25 kg of sand in a year; the beach crab which walks

sideways, cockles that bury themselves rapidly in the mud with their feet, the mud snail, fastest snail in the Wadden Sea – and brown shrimps, known to many only from delicious shrimp rolls.

The three Wadden Sea National Parks provide ideal conditions for birdwatchers. During the course of a year over ten million water birds and waders make use of the Wadden Sea – for breeding, resting, moulting and overwintering. Oystercatchers can be seen throughout the year. In spring they breed salt flat on the salt flats and their loud trilling can be heard above all other bird calls. Migratory birds such as dunlins and red knots use the Wadden Sea as a resting place in spring and autumn. Huge swarms perform fascinating flight manoeuvres between their feeding grounds on the mud flats and their resting places above the high-water mark.

When salt flat snow blows over the salt flats in winter, a small bird guest arrives: the snow bunting finds the conditions pleasant. In summer they breed in the Arctic Circle and then escape to the warmer Wadden Sea in winter. It feeds on plant seeds that are washed up salt flat from the salt flats or silt areas of the National Parks.

Common and grey seals are one of the most prominent mammals to be spotted regularly in the Wadden Sea, numbering about 21,000 common and 2,700 grey seals across the whole area. The best way to experience the seals is during a boat trip to the seal banks, operated by a National Park Partner.



Schleswig-Holstein
Wadden Sea
National Park



The Wadden area can be wild when west winds whip up the sea and waves pound against the dikes. The Halligen, ten small islands, protected only by so-called 'Deckwerk' revetments, can be submerged up to 70 times per year. Only the houses built on artificially constructed elevations stick out from under the sea. Experiencing such a storm will never be forgotten. However, one does not need a storm to store up exciting memories of a visit to the Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park.

The five inhabited Halligen belong to the biosphere reserve and the five small ones to the core zone of the National Park. Among them, the Hamburg Hallig is special: it is the only Hallig to be connected to the mainland by a dam. This connection can be used by pedestrians, cyclists and cars. A walk or a cycling tour through the salt flats, characterised by resting Brent geese in spring and autumn and breeding redshanks and blooming sea lavender in summer, is an unforgettable experience.

This National Park is the largest national park in central Europe. Wind, waves and tides ensure constant change – here letting nature take its course has a special meaning.

To provide guests with a special World Heritage Site experience guided tours, hikes and boat rides are offered to what they call the 'Small Five', 'Flying Five' and the 'Big Five'.

Mud worms, mud snails, cockles, crabs and shrimps make up the 'Small Five'. They are the little stars on mud flat hikes with National Park Partners and rangers. Twice a day, when the tide exposes the sea bottom, the many specialist species that have adapted to the extreme biome of the Wadden Sea appear.

The spring and autumn bird migrations, during which up to two million waders and water birds that breed on the coasts of Siberia, Canada and Greenland come to rest at the Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea, provide a special spectacle for nature lovers. Birdwatchers can take part in 'Flying Five' tours, which focus on five species: sheldrakes, oystercatchers, herring gulls, dunlins and Brent geese.

To visitors of African nature reserves the 'Big Five' means the following: the safari highlights of elephant, lion, rhino, buffalo and leopard. During a safari in the Wadden Seas other large animals can be approached quite closely. These 'Big Five' are the sturgeon, sea eagle, common and grey seals (observed from very close by on boat rides to the seal banks) and the porpoise – the only cetacean found in the Wadden Sea. It brings up its young in the cetacean reserve west of Sylt and Amrum islands.

A day in the National Park

If the weather is good, Westerhever can be visited. Walk from the parking area to the dike, cross the salt flats in front of the famous lighthouse. The sandbank ahead can be reached at the low tide. From spring to early summer, gulls and waders breed here, in late summer and autumn, thousands of arctic migratory birds rest on the sandbanks and salt flats. Huge flocks of geese can be seen in winter. To obtain information about the National Park, the Multimar Waddenforum in the small port town of Tönning can be visited. The National Park Centre offers an entertaining introduction to the exciting world of science: more than 280 species of fish, crayfish, mussels and snails are exhibited in 36 aquariums.

The main aquarium, where a diver can be observed feeding the fish twice a week and information can be obtained by microphone, is a special attraction. Another attraction is an 18 m long sperm whale that beached in the Wadden Sea many years ago. Children can get rid of their energy at the large water game park.

A week in the National Park

Monday: Arrival at National Park Partner accommodation on the mainland, or on the islands or Halligen. Evening walk on the beach and fish rolls at the harbour.

Tuesday: Natural history excursion to the mud flats with a park guide to get to know the 'Small Five', followed by an afternoon visit to a conservation organisation, at a local park station.

Wednesday: Boat ride into the National on a Park Partner boat from Büsum or Schlüttsiel, catch marine animal specimens with expert commentary on the way.

Thursday: Visit to the Multimar Waddenforum in Tönning, afternoon guided bird watching excursion with a conservation expert.

Friday: Boat ride with a National Park Partner boat from Nordstrand or Wyk to the seal banks.

Saturday: Sunshine! A day for the beach and bird watching, e.g. from the lighthouse at Westerhever. Evening: Enjoy some crab that you shelled yourself.



General information

Facts and figures

Location: The North Sea coast of Schleswig-Holstein, from the Danish border to the Elbe estuary

Surface area: 4,410 square kilometre

Altitude: – 15 to + 8 meters

Established: 1985

Landscape types: Mud flats, islands, Halligen, dunes, sandbanks, channels, salt flats and sea

Books and maps

Weltnaturerbe Wattenmeer
Martin Stock, Ute Wilhelmsen
ISBN 978-3-529-05321-4

Holiday map, Nordsee-Tourismus-Service GmbH

National Park Information

Nationalparkverwaltung
Schleswig-Holsteinisches Wattenmeer
Schlossgarten 1
25832 Tönning
Tel. 04861 616-0, Fax -69
nationalpark@lkn.landsh.de
www.nationalpark-wattenmeer.de

Nationalpark-Zentrum Multimar Wattforum
Am Robbenberg
25832 Tönning
Tel. 04861 9620-0, Fax -10
info@multimar-wattforum.de
www.multimar-wattforum.de

Accommodation

National Park Partners
Quality Hospitality Providers
www.nationalpark-partner.de/sh

Nordsee-Tourismus-Service GmbH
Tel. 01805 066077
www.nordseetourismus.de

How to get there

By train:

Hamburg-Westerland route with stops in Heide, Husum, Niebüll. In Heide there is a connection to Büsum, in Husum to St Peter-Ording, in Niebüll to Dagebüll.

By car:

From Hamburg on the A 23 in the direction of Heide, take the B 203 to Büsum, B 202 to St Peter-Ording or the B 5 in the direction of Tönning, Husum, and Niebüll. Car loading to Westerland at Niebüll. Ferries to the islands and Halligen von Dagebüll and Schlüttsiel.

Barrier-free visit

National Park Partners in the Wadden Seas provide many barrier-free accommodation possibilities. Additionally, there are the so-called 'Wattmobile' – wheelchairs that can be pulled over the mud flats, available at selected resorts. More information can be obtained from the National Park.

With its black and white colouring and the red bill the oystercatcher is the eye catcher among Wadden Sea National Park waders.

Nationalpark
Wattenmeer



SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN



Hamburg
Wadden Sea
National Park



When a row of Wadden wagons trail across the mud flats they look like a large yellow caterpillar crawling slowly over the dry and low-lying North Sea bed. The trip in a carriage and pair, over a distance of up to eight miles, from Cuxhaven-Sahlenburg and Cuxhaven-Duhnen to Neuwerk Island is the traditionally favourite means of transport to explore the Hamburg Wadden Sea National Park. During the trip over the seabed at low tide the island comes into view as its angular lighthouse rises above the horizon.

Neuwerk Island is also reachable on foot through the mud flats at low tide. The hike, along the route marked by brushwood bundles secured with three safety beacons, takes about two and a half hours to complete. A further mud flat hike runs from Neuwerk to the bird island Scharhörn. During the summer months the islands can also be reached by boat from Cuxhaven.

Other attractions offered by the National Park include walks across the salt flats, climbing a tower, excursions to the seal banks, and bird watching during the breeding season or at the resting places of countless birds. Further insights into the Wadden Sea biome are provided at the National Park House.

The protected area on the western side of the Elbe estuary belongs to the Lower Saxony Wadden Sea National Park and is bordered by open sea. The area is characterised by wide, mostly sandy Wadden flats with their winding channels. Scharhörn and Nigehörn islands are made up of mostly dunes and beaches, while the Neuwerker foreshore consists mostly of salt flats. Neuwerk is car-free and belongs, like the neighbouring islands Scharhörn and Nigehörn, to Hamburg Central District.

The Wadden Sea is known for their extreme dynamics. The rhythm of life is determined by spring and neap tide (the tidal range in the Elbe estuary is around three meters), storm floods with their extreme water levels cause land loss and raised foreshores.

The currents between the Elbe and Weser estuaries are particularly strong and responsible for significant sediment layering that increases with every tide. Considerable sand build-up takes place when the east wind blows.

Many thousands of wader and water birds like sandwich terns, Brent geese, oystercatchers and shelducks utilise the Wadden Seas as breeding area or resting place during migration. They all feed on the worms, mussels and shrimps that occur in incredible numbers in the mud beds.

The common seal is the only mammal found in the Hamburg Wadden Sea throughout the year. After the massive seal mortalities of 1988 the numbers have increased again to around 500 animals. Grey seals and porpoises are also spotted on occasion.

Apart from algae the Wadden is home only to a few hardy and salt-tolerant flowering plants species, like the glasswort. On the eastern foreshore of Neuwerk plants like sea lavender, sea asters and sea wormwood are slowly reclaiming old terrain.



Natural salt flats
development on the
eastern foreshore of
Neuwerk

A day in the National Park

A day visit to Neuwerk could consist of a two- to three-hour mud flat hike, a carriage ride of an hour or a boat trip of an hour and a half. A good overview of the Hamburg National Park can be obtained from the lighthouse that rises above Neuwerk and has been helping to keep beach robbers and pirates at bay since the 14th century.

Next to the lighthouse, the Neuwerk National Park Centre houses an exhibition about the Hamburg Wadden Sea and the island itself. On the marked trail through the salt flats to the east of the island breeding or resting birds can be observed from very close quarters.

A week in the National Park

Monday: Arrive on Neuwerk by boat. Check-in at comfortable accommodation and first trip around the island on the ring dike.

Tuesday: Perhaps rainy. Sleep in and read a novel about the pirate Störtebeker. Afternoon visit to the National Park Centre near the lighthouse.

Wednesday: Sunny. Morning visit up the lighthouse to get an overview. Afternoon guided salt flats tour with a park ranger to observe the oystercatcher, the mascot of the Hamburg Wadden Sea.

Thursday: Mud flat hike with the Jordsand association to the bird island Scharhörn. Apart from the birdlife the natural landscape is impressive.

Friday: Hike with a ranger to Kleiner Vogelsand, a high mud ridge in northern Neuwerk, where amber can be found after storms.

Saturday: Mud flat hike with a ranger to the seal bank. Afternoon swim in a tidal pool.

Saturday: After a farewell round trip of the island back to Cuxhaven by boat.

General information

To Neuwerk,
riding on a typical
Wadden wagon

Facts and figures

Location: In the Elbe estuary, about 10 km from Cuxhaven

Surface: 137 square kilometres

Altitude: – 18 to + 6 metres (dike at Neuwerk)

Established: 1990

Landscape types: Mud flats with Elbe freshwater influence, sandy spits, salt flats and dunes, tidal inlets, sandbanks and sea

Books and maps

Nationalpark-Atlas Hamburgisches Wattenmeer
Published by the Wadden Sea Environmental Authority at www.nationalpark-wattenmeer.de

National Park Information

*Nationalpark-Verwaltung
Hamburgisches Wattenmeer
c/o Behörde für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt
Stadthausbrücke 8
20355 Hamburg
Tel. 040 42840-3392, Fax -3552
www.nationalpark-wattenmeer.de*

*Nationalpark-Station Neuwerk
Tel. 04721 69271, Fax 28860
np-station@wattenmeer-hamburg.de*

*Nationalpark-Haus Neuwerk
Tel. 04721 395349, Fax 04721 395866
np-haus@wattenmeer-hamburg.de*

Accommodation

*Turm
Tel. 04721 29078*

*Haus Seeblick
Tel. 04721 20360*

*Das alte Fischerhaus
Tel. 04721 29043*

*Nige Hus
Tel. 04721 29561*

*Hus Achtern Diek
Tel. 04721 29076*



How to get there

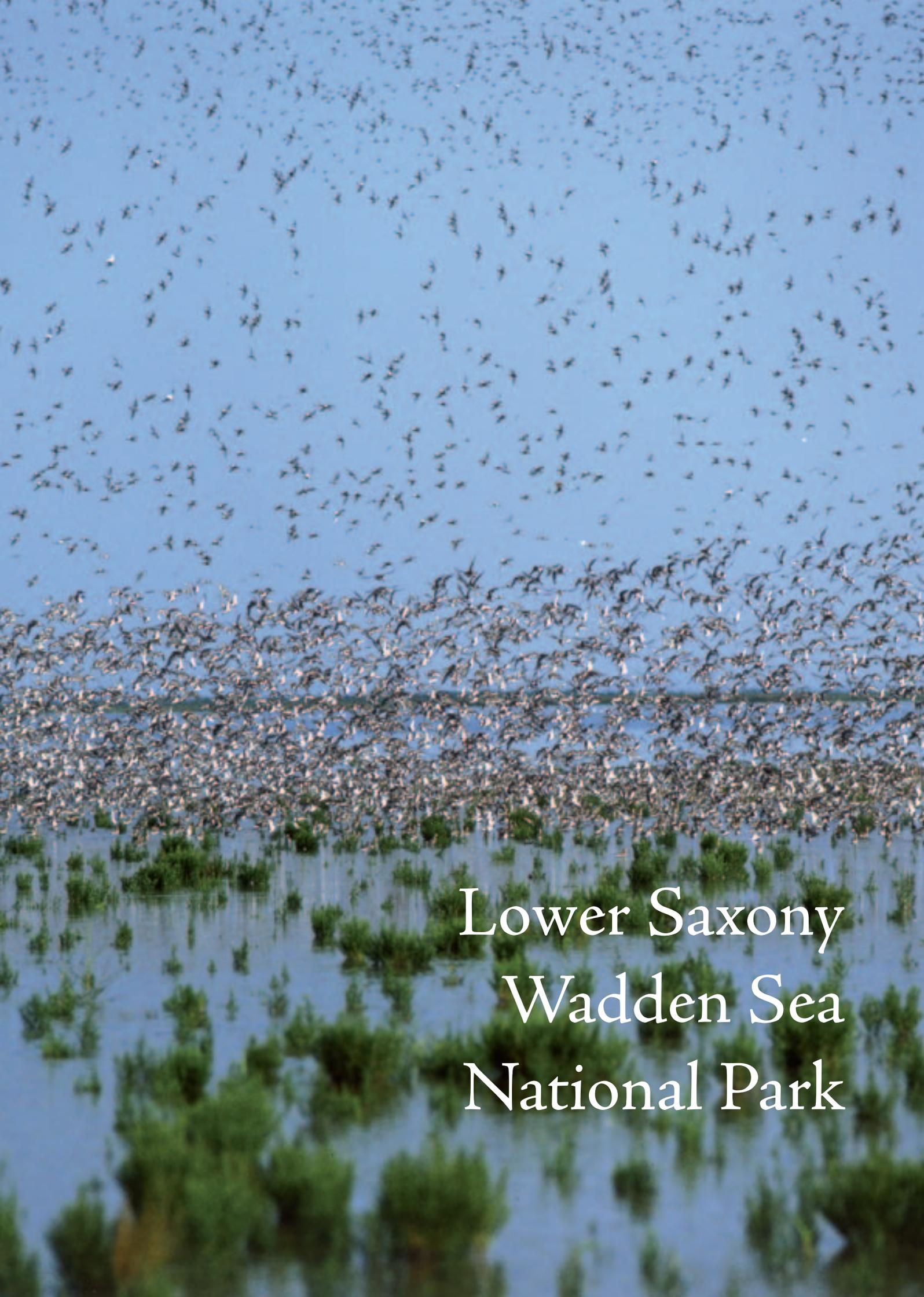
By train or car to Cuxhaven. Thence three ways to get to Neuwerk:

- ♦ On foot from Sahlenburg (bus from Cuxhaven Station to Sahlenburg district).
- ♦ By horse-drawn carriage from Sahlenburg or Duhnen (bus connection from Station 1).
- ♦ By boat MS Flipper from Cuxhaven Cassen Eils Line, Tel. 01805 228661, www.neuwerkreisen.de

Barrier-free visit

Unfortunately, it is impossible to make this National Park barrier-free. Guests can either hike across the mud flats (2–3 hr hike) or take a Wadden wagon or boat to Neuwerk. Disabled visitors should contact the transport operators in advance to find out the possibilities in every case. On Neuwerk itself only the roads in Binnengroden are mostly barrier-free. The ground floor of the National Park Centre (exhibition and ablutions) is barrier-free.



A large flock of birds, likely gulls or terns, is captured in flight over a wetland landscape. The birds are densely packed in the middle ground, creating a textured, greyish-brown mass against the blue sky. The foreground and middle ground are filled with green, scrubby vegetation growing in shallow water. The sky is a clear, pale blue, and the overall scene conveys a sense of a thriving, natural habitat.

Lower Saxony
Wadden Sea
National Park



When seen from afar, this place looks as if nature has expressed itself in minimalist art – straight horizontal lines, apparently endless monochrome surfaces, simple divisions and a limited colour spectrum. However, this UNESCO World Heritage Site landscape is extremely dynamic and species-rich. Nothing here stays the same for long. The Wadden Sea constantly changes its appearance.

The reason for this are the tides. Material taken away from one location through erosion is laid down at another by sedimentation. Twice a day the mud flats are flooded with organic matter and other material. Nutrient-rich sediment settles on the Wadden Sea bed. This organic matter forms, together with plankton micro-organisms, a fertile feeding ground for small animals. In one square meter of sea bed millions of diatoms, hundreds of thousands of the smallest shrimps, mussels, snails and worms are to be found, forming another link in the food chain by providing food for diverse fish, bird and mammal species. A hectare of this silt contains between three and twelve tons of wet biomass – more than the tropical rainforest!

The Lower Saxony Wadden Sea National Park stretches from the Dutch border at the Ems estuary (Dollart, Borkum) to the Elbe estuary in the west (Cuxhaven) at the border of Schleswig-Holstein. The Lower Saxony Wadden Sea is formed by three landscape types: the East Friesian Islands in the east, with their high dunes and natural salt flats, are almost entirely within the National Park. Between islands and the mainland the mud flats are extended by extensive sand flats, mixed flats and silt flats spreading for almost 20 kilometres along the Elbe Weser regions.

Salt flats can be found in many places immediately in front of the dikes of the mainland coast. With Jade Bay, Ley Bay and a part of Dollart, the Lower Saxony protected area includes large

wadden bights that were formed by embayment when the sea invaded the land during the Middle Ages. In these areas the typical combination of sand flats, mixed flats and silt flats as well as dry land belts and salt flats that make up the biome can be seen particularly well.

This part of the German-Dutch Wadden Sea World Heritage Site offers many possibilities for experiencing habitats and life cycles at close quarters. The uniqueness of the landscape strikes one particularly in summer, during one of the many guided tours in the coastal area or to one of the dune islands that form a barrier between the Wadden Sea and the North Sea. On the eastern sides of the Norderney and Spiekeroog islands, largely uninhabited 'wash over' areas remain where the sea once flowed right over the islands, through the dunes and salt flats into the mud flats.

Dune dynamics, including the wealth of shapes represented by the different dune stages, valleys and crests, can be experienced on Borkum, Norderney, Baltrum, Spiekeroog and Langeoog.

Guided bird watching tours, conducted by park staff, or a seal trip by boat are excellent opportunities for observing the wildlife of the mud flats. To gain insight into the wealth of marine life found in the region, National Park Experience boat trips in a small cutter, complete with dragnet catch, as offered from different resorts along the coast, are recommended.

Giant flocks of birds populate the mud flats and salt flats during migration.

A day in the National Park

In good weather a day tour from Nessmersiel to Baltrum Island is recommended. Accompanied by a Wadden Sea guide, certified by the National Park, you can hike for about 7 kilometres across the mud flats to the smallest of the seven East Frisian Islands, spend four hours there and at high tide come back to the mainland by boat. Visiting one of the fourteen Park Centres is an option in all kinds of weather, e.g. in Dornumersiel, Greetsiel, or in Norddeich which also serves as a seal station where these marine mammals can be seen live.

During the annual bird migration in autumn, various events are staged at the Lower Saxony Wadden Sea National Park, ranging from a classical bird trip on foot or bus or boat trips to cultural and culinary events, offering something for everyone. Longer packages can also be put together. More information and complete itineraries can be found at www.zugvogeltage.de

A week in the National Park

Monday: Arrival, together with your bicycle, at Bremerhaven station. Catch the ferry to Norderham and cycle along the dike in a westerly direction. Excellent accommodation is available in the small villages like Fedderwardersiel with its National Park House, or in guest houses in Langwarden.

Tuesday: Boat trip on the eastern shore of Jade Bay to the south to the unique 'floating moors' of Außendeich, one of a kind in the world, at Sehestedt. A nature trail leads through the moor to a bird hide. Overnight in Dangast, famous for its expressionist artist movement 'Die Brücke' at the Jade Bay.

Wednesday: Cycle trip around Jade Bay in the direction of Wilhelmshaven. Rainy weather provides a good reason to visit the National Park Centre in Wilhelmshaven.

Thursday: Destination for the day: Harlesiel/ Carolinensiel. Insights into the world of the North Sea at the Wangerland North Sea Centre aquariums in pretty Minsen. Swim in the North Sea at destination.

Friday: Today, the bikes stay at home. We are going on a day trip by boat to Wangerooge. The trip by island rail, the so-called 'Bird Train', through flowering salt flats, past countless birds, is a unique experience. Don't let the walk through the fragrant dune landscape make you forget the return trip.

Saturday: The last stage of the cycle tour leads to Jever where the train awaits.



General information

Facts and figures

Location: North Sea coast of Lower Saxony, from the Elbe estuary at Cuxhaven to the Dutch border

Surface: 3,450 square kilometres

Altitude: – 15 to +20 m (dunes of the East Friesian Islands)

Established: 1986

Landscape types: Mud flats, sandbanks, tidal inlets, sea, islets with dunes and beach, salt flats, sandy upland cliffs, moors, meadows

Books and maps

Unser Nationalpark
and regional leaflets (available at no cost at the National Park Authorities, National Park Houses and Centres)

Wattenmeer für Entdecker
Volume I
ISBN 978-3-8754-2059-3 (9,80 Euro)
Volume II
ISBN 978-3-86918-028-1 (9,80 Euro)

*Vögel beobachten im Nationalpark
Niedersächsisches Wattenmeer*
ISBN 3-7595-0910-4 (12,90 Euro)

National Park Information

*Nationalparkverwaltung
Niedersächsisches Wattenmeer*
Virchowstraße 1
26382 Wilhelmshaven
Tel. 04421 911-0, Fax -280
poststelle@nlpv-wattenmeer.niedersachsen.de
www.nationalpark-wattenmeer.de
www.nationalpark-wattenmeer-erleben.de

Nationalpark-Zentrum Cuxhaven
Tel. 04721 28681
www.nationalpark-wattenmeer-cuxhaven.de

Nationalpark-Zentrum Wilhelmshaven
Tel. 04421 91070
www.wattenmeerhaus.de

Accommodation

Die Nordsee-Marketing GmbH
Tel. 04421 9560990
www.die-nordsee.de

How to get there

By train:

Stations (with bus transfer) to the island ferries: Sande/Harlesiel (to Wangerooge) Esens (to Spiekeroog and Wangerooge), Norddeich/Mole (to Norderney, Juist), Nessmersiel via Norddeich (to Baltrum), Emden Außenhafen (to Borkum).

Further destination stations: Wilhelmshaven, Varel, Nordenham, Cuxhaven.

By car:

Motorway A 27 to Bremerhaven/Cuxhaven; A 29 over Oldenburg to Wilhelmshaven/Sande/Varel; A 28 over Rheine to Emden/Norddeich. Good advice for those looking for sustainable transport: the 'Holidaymaker Bus for one Euro' on the East Friesian peninsula.
www.urlauberbus.info

Barrier-free visit

There are many barrier-free accommodation establishments on the coast and on the islands. Various resorts, e.g. Tossens, Wilhelmshaven, Schillig, Carolinensiel and Norddeich, provide so-called 'Wattmobile' with silt-proof balloon tyres so that mobility-impaired visitors can nevertheless enjoy the unique experience of crossing the Wadden Sea. There is a barrier-free salt-marsh trail at Sande-Ceciliengroden. Consult the National Park Information Points for opportunities for people with impaired sight or hearing and learning disabilities.





*The National Natural
Landscapes of Germany –
all under one umbrella*

All over Germany there are National Parks, Biosphere Reserves and Nature Parks: protected areas that are designated to conserve and enhance the country's natural heritage. They are the most spectacular natural resources Germany has to offer. They are 'beautiful by nature' in the truest sense of the word. Together they form Germany's 'Nationale Naturlandschaften', the famous National Natural Landscapes, all with a similar logo. Here visitors can experience a truly unique world – from the Wadden Sea and the central German floodplains right up to the Alps.



Junior Rangers form a 'Living Map of Germany': 35 designated National Natural Landscapes take part in this federal programme.

National Parks

National parks are areas where nature is allowed to run its course. They conserve and enhance natural landscapes by protecting the sovereignty of nature and securing the habitat for its endemic fauna and flora. Thus National Parks create spaces for a unique experience of nature but also for first-class environmental education and research. They play an indispensable part in conserving the biodiversity and wealth of species on our planet. At the same time they make an invaluable economic contribution to their region and beyond.

Biosphere Reserves

Biosphere reserves are model areas where the harmonious living-together of people and nature can be developed and realised. They protect cultural landscapes from disrupting influences and create valuable living spaces for people and nature. They ensure a balanced relationship between human exploitation and natural cycles, thus contributing to the socio-economic well-being of the area. Biosphere reserves ensure the public recognition of research and scientific contributions in the field of synergy between natural and societal processes.

Nature Parks

Nature parks are areas where people and nature are allowed to recover. They are there to protect and enhance landscapes and support nature-friendly responsible tourism. They promote sustainable regional development and help develop opportunities for environmental education and publicity. In this way they help everybody to find the right balance between the demands people make on their environment and the needs of nature, the landscape and nature conservation.

Acting together – National Natural Landscapes and EUROPARC

There is for the more than 100 designated National Natural Landscapes in Germany one umbrella organisation that handles all their public affairs: EUROPARC Germany. It is the working platform for joint information, educational and publicity issues, for procurement, project and organisational development, as well as research and political advisory issues.





Above: National Park Partner 'Ernstthof' in the Bavarian Forest

Below: People relaxing at hay time in the Nature Park Ore Mountain / Vogtland



Making nature accessible and enjoyable for all – the National Natural Landscapes and EUROPARC

Nature conservation only works if the reasons for it are understood by as many people as possible. At the same time, the need to be close to nature and enjoying it is something that most people understand. Nature can provide tranquillity for people who want to switch off. It can also provide a physical challenge for those who love sport and exercise. Nature is open to all – here we can all find enjoyment and fulfilment.

EUROPARC is therefore always striving to develop new ideas and programmes that bring together conservation and enjoyment, promote better understanding and the widest possible palette of experiences. Here are but three examples:

'Pride in Nature' – volunteers in parks

Doing something worthwhile, getting to know new people, having fun, broadening one's knowledge and skills, helping to change the world a little – this can all be done if you join the Park volunteers programme. With the help of this programme, around 3,000 people get involved every year in the work of National Natural Landscapes. Here they work together with conservation professionals and Park staff, assisting them with great enthusiasm and a thirst for knowledge in order to help protect valuable ecosystems. Exciting and interesting nature experiences are guaranteed in this way. More information about this way to spend your free time can be found at www.ehrensache-natur.de.

Junior Rangers

Forests, mud flats, meadows and mountains – they all present exciting opportunities for children to discover the value of nature and to understand why nature and its biodiversity are important. For this reason many designated National Natural Landscapes in Germany invite children between seven and twelve years old to take part in their Junior Ranger programme. The success of the programme is shown by the fact that more than 3,000 girls and boys take up the invitation every year. The programme includes exploring plant and animal life accompanied by a ranger, conserving a little piece of nature and above all, having fun. More information at www.junior-ranger.de.

Holidays with our Partners

All the German National Natural Landscapes offer visitors the chance to use their insider knowledge and have a holiday 'with a clear conscience'. All partner enterprises of protected areas in Germany are carefully selected by the National Natural Landscape authorities according to strict quality criteria. The partners are involved in natural and environmental protection activities in their respective home regions. More than 450 service and accommodation providers offer a multitude of tourism products, from accommodation and food to transport, excursions and guided tours through forests, across the Wadden Sea, etc. This partnering programme with its countless provisions offers a very successful model that helps to increase people's holiday enjoyment of nature. More information at www.nationale-naturlandschaften.de/partner.

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