



NATURE PARKS IN GERMANY

People and Nature belong together

Nationale
Naturlandschaften



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www.naturpark-altmuehlal.de

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www.naturpark-elbhoehen-wendland.de

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Märkische Schweiz



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15377 Buckow
Tel. 033433 158-41
www.np-ms.brandenburg.de

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Pfälzerwald



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67466 Lambrecht (Pfalz)
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www.pfaelzerwald.de

Naturpark
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Tel. 039771 441-08
www.naturpark-am-stettiner-haff.de

Naturpark
Erzgebirge/Vogtland



Schlossplatz 8
09487 Schleittau
Tel. 03733 622106
www.naturpark-erzgebirge-vogtland.de

Naturpark
Mecklenburgische Schweiz
und Kummerower See



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Tel. 039957 29120
www.naturpark-mecklenburgische-schweiz.de

Naturpark
Schlaubetal



Wirchensee OT Treppeln
15898 Neuzelle
Tel. 033673 422
www.naturpark-schlaubetal.brandenburg.de

Naturpark
Barnim



Wandlitzer Chaussee 55
16321 Bernau b. Berlin
Tel. 03338 75176-0
www.naturpark-barnim.brandenburg.de

Naturpark
Feldberger Seenlandschaft



Strelitzer Straße 42
17258 Feldberger Seenlandschaft
Tel. 039831 5278-0
www.naturpark-feldberger-seenlandschaft.de

Naturpark
Meißner-Kaufunger Wald



Wolfteroder Straße 4 a
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www.naturparkmeissner.de

Naturpark
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Ruppiner Land



Kirchstraße 4
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www.np-srl.brandenburg.de

Naturpark
Bayerischer Wald



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Naturpark
Hessische Rhön



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Naturpark
Münden



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Tel. 05541 75-259
www.naturpark-muenden.de

Naturpark
Sternberger Seenland



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www.np-sternberger-seenland.de

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www.flaeming.net

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Heidellandschaft



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04924 Bad Liebenwerda
Tel. 035341 615-0
www.np-nlh.brandenburg.de

Naturpark
TERRA.vita



Am Schölerberg 1
49082 Osnabrück
Tel. 0541 501-4217
www.naturpark-terravita.de

Naturpark
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Waldecker Straße 12
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Tel. 05632 401-162 oder -164
www.naturpark-diemelsee.de

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Naturpark
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15926 Luckau OT Fürstlich Drehna
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Naturpark
Thüringer Schiefergebirge
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Naturpark
Drömling



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Naturpark
Kellerwald-Edersee



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Oberpfälzer Wald



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Naturpark
Ebbegebirge



Westfälische Straße 75
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Naturpark
Kyffhäuser



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Naturpark
Nossentiner/Schwinzer Heide



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Naturpark
Westhavelland



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Naturpark
Eichsfeld-Hainich-Werratal



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Naturpark
Lauenburgische Seen



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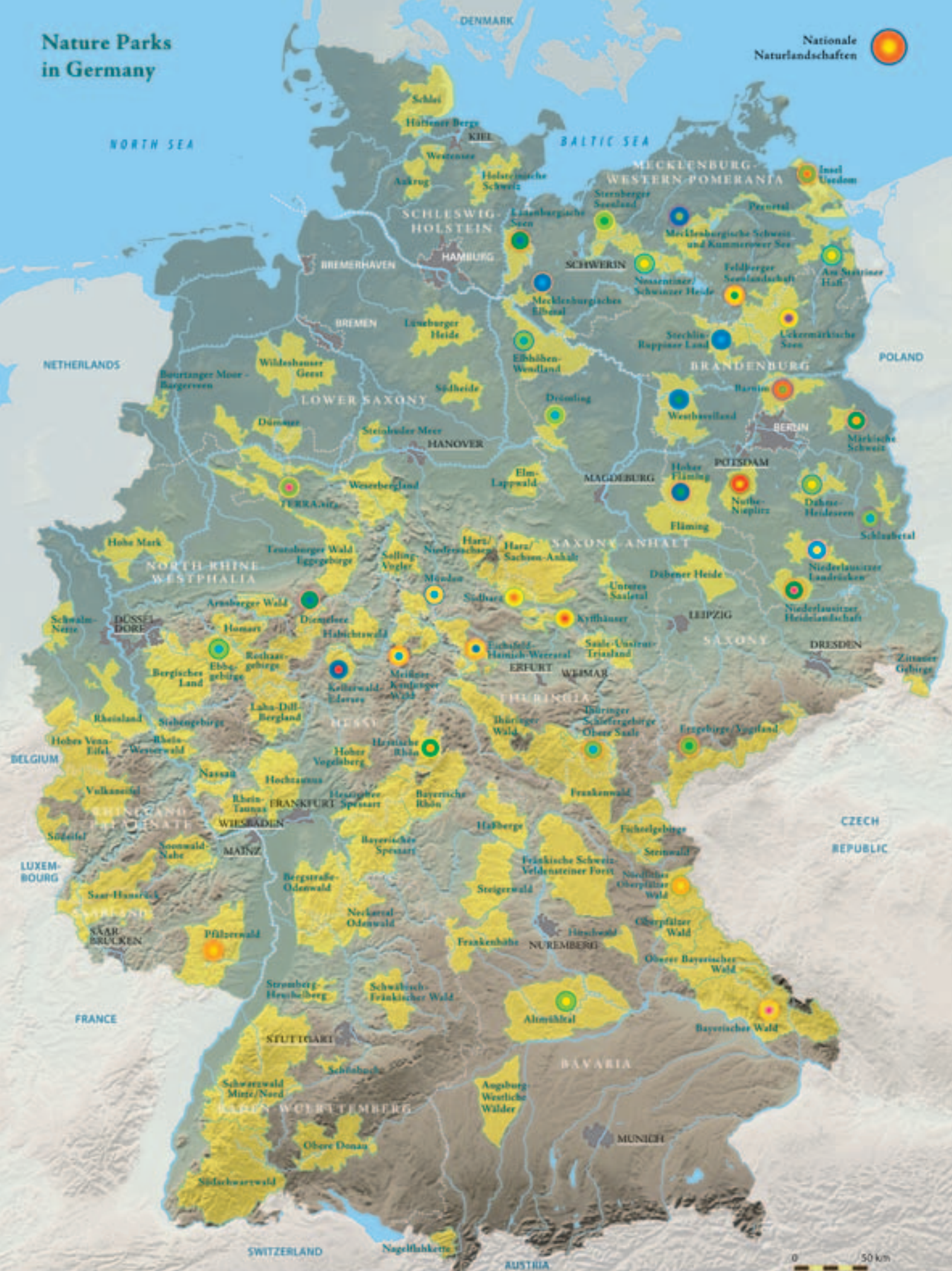
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Nature Parks in Germany

Nationale
Naturlandschaften



Nature Park
National Natural Landscape
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Federal state border
MAINZ: State capital

Further information about the Nature Parks:

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Introduction



Germany's rich natural heritage is largely represented by more than 100 Nature Parks.

Their combined area exceeds 9.6 million hectares, which means they cover more than a quarter of the total surface area of Germany. Tourism is a key factor for the Nature Parks and also a major economic factor in the region. Nature Parks offer the urban population in particular nearby opportunities to experience nature in the truest sense of the word, since there are one or two Nature Parks close to each major city. Each one is a unique landscape with its own characteristic features. The nature resorts, with their varied landscapes featuring mountains, forests, lakes and rivers, are thus in an excellent position to bring visitors even closer to nature by offering recreation and leisure facilities and opportunities for environmental education.

The major task of the German Federal Foundation for Environment (Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt – DBU) is to support this potential and to ensure that youngsters can experience the appeal of nature. This is why it has launched numerous projects in German Nature Parks at a total cost of almost nine million euros. Particularly prominent among them are projects to establish, develop and optimise environmental education and information centres, for example, the Sustainability House in the Palatinate Forest Nature Park and the Nature Park Information Centre in the Bavarian Forest. These facilities hold exhibitions providing children and families in particular with comprehensive information and they also enhance visitors' awareness of the special features of the Nature Parks. At the same time, the buildings themselves are intended to be exemplary by using sustainable and resource-sparing constructions. This explains why the Bavarian Forest Nature Park Information Centre was designed as a zero energy house built of wood, without a conventional heating system. The buildings should thus be seen as a means of promoting the wider use of wood, highly effective energy concepts and healthy construction materials

– and not only for dwelling houses, but also in the construction of public and commercial buildings. The Bavarian Forest Nature Park is also home to the DBU-sponsored European Bat Centre. In the historical border station of Eisenstein, the highest border station in Germany, the interactive permanent exhibition is intended to interest visitors in the world of bats.

The development of modern teaching concepts is equally exciting: the key to arousing the enthusiasm of young people for nature and the environment is to offer them opportunities for stimulating exchange. Accordingly, the DBU has promoted the establishment of youth camps, such as the International Geopark Youth Camp in the TERRA.vita Nature Park. At the International Geopark Conference in 2008, which was also supported by the DBU, young people from the European Geoparks developed their perspective of their respective park and presented their ideas.

These examples are just a small sample of the many opportunities which the Nature Parks have to offer. They also make it clear that Nature Parks are perfect locations from which to discover and enjoy nature, and develop even greater enthusiasm for its variety and beauty.

DR.-ING. E. H. FRITZ BRICKWEDDE
GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE GERMAN
FEDERAL FOUNDATION FOR ENVIRONMENT
(DEUTSCHE BUNDESSTIFTUNG UMWELT – DBU)



Eurasian Pygmy-Owl

Nature Parks – Nature and Tourism go Hand in Hand

Nature Parks aim to protect and develop landscapes – along with their plants, animals and in particular the people living there. Dr. Johannes Hager is Manager of the Eichsfeld-Hainich-Werratal Nature Park and since 2003 has also been a board member of EUROPARC Germany. He explains what Nature Parks are and the unique environment they represent.

In Germany there are three different categories of natural landscapes. What is the difference between Nature Parks, National Parks and Biosphere Reserves?

Nature Parks are intended for the harmonious co-existence of humans and nature. In National Parks we want to preserve the natural world, and the presence of humans in the 'Nature Park' ecosystem makes them important actors. Much of the symbiosis in Nature Parks is the result of interaction between humans and nature, meaning they are characterised as cultural landscapes where humans have left their mark. Many animals and plants have found their habitat there solely as a result of human activity. Nature Parks are similar to the UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in that they are model regions for linking conservation with sustainable regional development. You could perhaps describe the Nature Park as the national brother of the internationally-known Biosphere Reserves.

Thanks to their size, versatility and integrated development approach, Nature Parks are particularly well-suited to act as test beds for pressing current issues. These include, for example, the protection of biological diversity, climate protection, environmental education, and preservation of regional cultures and traditions as well as environmentally-compatible regional development, which includes tourism. By taking on these challenges, Nature Parks can also help promote rural life and counter the rural exodus.

Many people are unaware that the Nature Parks in Germany are not a new 'invention', but have actually been around for many years.

That's right, the history of the Nature Parks dates back to 1909 with the founding of the Nature Conservation Park Association. In 1956 the Hamburg-born merchant and philanthropist, Dr. Alfred Töpfer, used a template that would seem modern even today, to create 25 Nature Parks that slowly merged into the concept of the 'Nature Park'. The number of Nature Parks grew steadily in the following years. Today the Federal Republic of Germany boasts 103 Nature Parks, which still cover more than a quarter of the total surface area of the country.

However, the Nature Parks are still facing challenges, and achievements to date should be used as the foundation for further progress.

The GDR's National Park Programme, which was concluded in 1990 as the regime's final act, gave new impetus to efforts to develop Nature Parks, the effects of which are still apparent today. The process involves returning to ancient roots and developing new standards from them, but also raising the bar at the same time. The tasks and targets of the Nature Parks were reformulated, overall concepts and criteria were developed, and a proactive effort was set in motion to ensure higher quality.

Around half the Nature Parks are involved in the implementation of this so-called 'quality action', including all those presented in this brochure!

Although conservation remains a key goal, there is still a need for people – even as visitors.

Nature Parks are generally located in places of particular beauty. Perhaps we perceive this beauty with special clarity, given the fact that the Nature Parks encompass both nature left intact, and landscapes shaped by people with their historical settlements typical of the region, mostly side by side, with localised change. This change, while eye-catching, is also tranquil and even lets you step outside reality. In Nature Parks human beings and the natural world co-exist with the focus on both – this is where humans and nature belong together. Natural Parks are places all of us would enjoy spending our holidays – so why not come and visit!



Dr. Johannes Hager,
Manager of the Eichsfeld-
Hainich-Werratal Nature Park
and chairman of EUROPARC
Germany, umbrella
organisation of National
Natural Landscapes



Promoting Variety every Day in the Nature Parks

‘Nature Parks are regions in which humans and nature can recover. This is where people preserve and showcase landscape and nature’ (quoted from the mission statement of the Nature Parks, which are members of EUROPARC). After 2010, the year of biodiversity, the question is: what role do Nature Parks play in association with National Parks and Biosphere Reserves in terms of preserving biodiversity?

The Germans love nature, and this can be expressed in figures: a survey commissioned by the Federal Ministry of the Environment showed that 89 percent of Germans considered conservation to be an important political task. Protecting nature also means preserving the variety of species in our native landscapes and this often involves dramatic scenarios. Of the 478 vertebrate species native to Germany, 207 are on the Red List. This records species which are threatened, untraceable or already confirmed as extinct.

Germany is not managing to prevent this loss of species, which is no easy task in a country as densely populated as Germany and under such great human influence. Hence the Nature Parks fulfil an important role as part of the ‘National Strategy for Biological Diversity’ decreed by the Federal Cabinet in 2007. A large proportion of the Nature Parks actively strive to protect animal and plant species and this applies particularly to species which are included on the Red Lists of German federal states.

Germany has a total of 103 Nature Parks, which collectively comprise over a quarter of the country’s total area – an impressive figure which reflects their importance. Over a total area exceeding 9.6 million ha, they make a significant contribution to preserving biological variety – in addition to many other merits in the form of tourism, regional development, environmental education and public relations.

The key task of Nature Parks is to preserve landscapes that have been influenced by human beings and ensure their sustainable development. A variety of cultural landscapes have developed, each characterised by its own geology, weather and terrain. Each has its own specific features and its own biodiversity. Many of the species were introduced by human beings and integrated into their lifestyles and eating habits, such as the potato, providing a range of varieties which is threatened today. For apples there is a similar story: up until 1900, Germany was still home to around 1,000 varieties of apples, whereas there are just ten to twenty today. In Nature Parks, the task therefore involves preserving both culture and nature – and often doing so in close collaboration with other neighbouring protected areas, like National Parks and Biosphere Reserves. Two examples illustrate the work carried out in the Nature Parks ‘on-site’.



The Drömling Nature Park at the border of Lower Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt is a former marsh which was transformed from a natural landscape into a cultural landscape in the 18th century, by draining on the orders of Frederick the Great. Here, most importantly very rare habitats exist for meadow breeders. It is not sufficient to merely preserve them. They should also be expanded, and one way of doing this is to turn farmland into grassland.

Dams and new moisture sinks provide valuable food resources for birds. These sinks are designed such that in summer they dry up and can be mown with farm machinery. This is the only way to maintain their appeal for meadow breeders and resting migrant birds. Preserving meadow breeders, however, also means permanent support for individual breeding bird species, such as the Eurasian Curlew. It has been recorded as severely threatened on Germany's Red List. In the Drömling Nature Park, the Nature Watch Team have taken on the challenging task of managing meadowland birds.

This involves mapping the breeding grounds, as well as making arrangements with farmers to facilitate this sensitive bird's breeding process.

Another example is the pearl mussel in the Vogt region of Perlbach. It is also on Germany's Red List and is found in the Nature Parks of Ore Mountains/Vogtland. The Nature Park extends over 120 kilometres along the Saxon-Bohemian border and runs alongside water for much of its length: the protected area includes some raised bogs and many spring mires, numerous brooks, rivers and wetlands.

Only pristine brooks are awarded the water quality class 1, which is the level required to ensure the pearl mussel can survive. The emphasis in the Vogtland area is therefore on the renaturation of straightened and deepened brooks and rivers. The Tetterweinbach Valley, for example, shows precisely how formerly intensively used creek valleys can be restored to a pristine state. To achieve this, the brook was given a new stream bed with various structural elements. After a few years, there was successful resettlement of mussel species typical of brooks.

Another project is being organised by the Nature Park in Fuhrbach in Tiefenbrunn and Papstleithen in the Vogt region of Eichigt. The goal here is to successfully manage the creek topography as a meandering meadow creek which can be made to follow its original course as far as possible. The establishment of a sedimentation pond should contribute towards improving water quality. The course of the stream will become a spawning ground for brook trout once the existing pipes have been dismantled.

Many Nature Parks, in addition to their recreational function, also have an important task in terms of preserving and promoting the resurgence of species.



Above: Harz Brocken
Anemone

Below:
Lynx in the Harz



Dipper diving into the brooks of the Slate Mountains in search of food

In addition to offering means of protecting the natural world, they are also a haven that guarantees and may even boost the variety of species in a region. The significance of Nature Parks is supported by the National Strategy for Biological Variety of the Federal Government, according to which around 30 percent of areas in Germany are to be protected as Nature Parks by 2020, a goal which would be a win-win for both humans and nature!

Many Nature Parks, in addition to their recreational function, also have an important task in terms of preserving and promoting the resurgence of species.

Abundant cornflowers on crop fields are today a rare sight



Lauenburg Lakes Nature Park

Calm pleasure and a tingly experience



Above: Beautiful views
wherever you look

Below: Water, forest
and many enchanting
sites

The hilly landscape of the Lauenburg Lakes Nature Park, with its numerous forests and lakes, offers visitors unforgettable impressions. The variety of different habitats in the region is the result of the last Ice Age, which formed this landscape. The previously secluded position on the former border between East Germany and West Germany favoured naturally beautiful landscapes and their rich plant and animal species, which may have already died out elsewhere. Examples include numerous threatened species such as ospreys, cranes and fish otters. Visitors have the chance to enjoy restful and varied recreation all the year round, which is made easier by the farmhouse cafes and farm shops, country inns and hay hostels, cultural sights and natural attractions. The Nature Park arouses curiosity – you can decide for yourself how you would like to discover its concealed natural and cultural treasures. The region has many different types of paths that invite discovery by canoe or by bicycle, on horseback or on a walking tour.

Tips about the Nature Park

Canoeing areas for all

The 'water hiking' path, over 30 kilometres long, runs from Wakenitz, just outside the gates of Lübeck, up to the Schaalsee, and offers tours full of action for canoeists. Boarding and alighting assistance, as well as rest areas and notice boards are all you need concerning the lakes and canals of the Nature Park. With over 40 lakes, the Nature Park offers an unrivalled setting for activities in and on the water.

Discovery tour with your mobile phone

No matter whether you are following the Elbe-Lübeck Canal or taking a thematic round trip – you are sure to find the correct route in the Nature Park. Over 235 kilometres and at 34 stations, discover the region by mobile phone – facts about your location, exciting and interesting details, notes and anecdotes.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

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www.naturpark-lauenburgische-seen.de

Tourism: www.hlms.de

Naturpark
Lauenburgische Seen





Tips about the Nature Park

Excursions

Both the Nature Park and private service providers offer a wide range of excursions within the region. These include guided tours exploring landscape formation and botanical themes that take visitors through the oldest beech forest of Germany, and special guided tours with animal watching.

Flower meadow

The meadow park in Feldberg is an extensively cultivated flower meadow of a type that is unfortunately all too rare. Here, visitors can experience how the different forms of mowing define the structure of the meadow. The park is at its best at the start of June, when the leaved marsh orchid, a splendid example, comes into bloom.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

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Feldberg Lakeland Nature Park

In the land of fish otters, eagles and lakes

The Nature Park boasts a variety of animal species which find their habitat within its lakes, marshes and forests. These include fish otters and beavers, which make themselves at home in the pristine lakes, rivers and streams. One of the most prominent animals that live in this Nature Park is the Lesser Spotted Eagle, which is threatened with extinction and exists alongside the osprey in lakes and rivers. Lesser Spotted Eagles are very shy animals which react particularly sensitively to the intensification of agriculture, the expansion of infrastructure and changes within the forest. Unlike other species of eagles, they are often found in pristine, structured foliage and mixed forests with neighbouring open grassland, hunting for prey on foot. A further 140 breeding bird species underline the special value of this landscape.

The oldest German protected beech forest – the ‘Hallowed Halls’ – is particularly unique. It owes its name to the tall trunks, which are reminiscent of Gothic buildings. The Nature Park, which was shaped during the Ice Age, is well known for its clear lakes and was celebrated by the poet Hans Fallada, who lived and worked in Carwitz.



Above: View of Feldberg with Haussee and Breitem Luzin

Below: Museum windmills in Woldegk



Szczecin Bay Nature Park

*Idyllic landscape on the
naturally-preserved coastal lagoon*



Above:
Galenbecker Lake –
area of peat land at
Fleethof

Below: Flora on
the Altwarper Inland
Dunes

In Mecklenburg-Pomerania, one of the most recently founded Nature Parks, you can experience the variety of a landscape skirting the coast. How about taking a stroll in the Altwarper Inland Dunes, where you can enjoy the view of the lagoon?

Those who fancy something steeper ground should consider a trip into the Brohm Mountains, to encounter relics dating back to the Ice Age. Historians can check out the remains of the Slavic refuge at Plöwen, and take a 'leap back in time' to the Middle Ages among Slavonic tribes in the Ukranen land at Torgelow, with its fully restored houses and ships.

Numerous rare species of animals and plants such as ospreys and various types of orchid can also be discovered in the Nature Park. Beavers, which also occur in this area, much prefer to go about their business unseen by the human eye. However, the feeding tracks on trees and the one or more beavers' nests reveal where they make their home.

Tips about the Nature Park

Green classroom – Nature as a place for learning

Under the motto 'Look, touch, try,' one special focus is the playful work of the Nature Park to familiarise its visitors with its plants and animals. We will be more than happy to tell you all about our latest curriculum. This is one way to encourage children of school or pre-school age to discover the Nature Park in the nature watch team stations or on hikes.

Nature Park expedition

So, is that everything we want to mention? OK, then let's start! Immerse yourself within a research team in the deep secrets of the animals and plants of the Nature Park and uncover some surprises. What we have to offer here is aimed at all school classes from primary school to the first year of secondary school.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

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www.natur-mv.de

**Naturpark
Am Stettiner Haff**





Tips about the Nature Park

Castle tour

The Nature Park offers leisure visitors a comprehensive network of trails, e.g. the great castle tour, a cycle tour of approx. 65 kilometres offering every chance to enjoy the variety of castles, manor houses and parkways. A shorter version is the mini castle tour, which can also be covered on foot. Here, nature lovers are catered for just as much as visitors who are more historically and culturally inclined.

With a view...

You can get a close look at waterfowl and a panoramic view over the lakes from the observation towers at Verchen, Aalbude, Jettchenshof and Neukalen on Kummerower Lake, as well as at Wendischhagen and Dahmen on Malchiner Lake and from the Teterow Burgwall Island.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

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www.mecklenburgische-schweiz.com

Mecklenburg Switzerland and Kummerower Lake Nature Park

Land of hills and old trees

This hilly landscape in the north is evocative of a small mountain range, hence its name 'Mecklenburg Switzerland'. Visitors can enjoy a very broad view from the lofty heights, which takes in rolling hills, extensive low-lying areas, lakes, fields, meadows and small villages.

This Nature Park is also characterised by its many castles, farm houses and parkways. Particularly inviting for those wanting to hike are the areas around the Malchiner and Kummerower lakes, the two biggest in the Nature Park. In many places there are ancient oaks and smaller areas of running water, as well as abundant ringed cranes and geese in autumn and spring. The Nature Park is a crucial breeding, resting and over-wintering site for many species of birds.

The lakes accommodate Nordic ducks and geese such as white-fronted and bean geese, and also hooded dippers, wigeons and smew, which use it as a resting place. Cranes use the Nature Park as a breeding ground, but they are joined by other species such as sedge warblers, blue throats, penduline tits and common rosefinch, all of which are often sighted. Other highlights among the fauna include fish otters, beavers, fire-bellied toads and hermits.



Above:
Wendischhagen on
Malchiner Lake

Below: View of
Basedow Castle





Nature Park Usedom Island

The green island on the sea



Above: Cliffs in the protected nature area, Streckelsberg at Koserow

Below: Historical bridges in the Baltic Sea resort of Ahlbeck

... is how many refer to Usedom, which is one of the sunniest Baltic Sea islands. Long sandy beaches, steep and rugged banks and extensive dune landscapes are among its characteristic features. Its resorts are equally unique, lined up like a string of pearls with their piers, promenades and villas with impressive architecture. Those who find beach life too hectic, however, will feel more at home in the inland area with quiet backwaters, submerged villages and blooming salt flats.

Usedom Island is one of the best bird watching spots in the whole of Eastern Germany. A total of over 280 species have been observed here, including eleven birds of prey, which regularly breed in the Nature Park. White storks, cranes and grey heron are also common. During the migration season in particular, the island is teeming with tens of thousands of Nordic geese, ducks and snipe birds, which follow the coastline and the glacial valley of the Oder.

Tips about the Nature Park

Nature Park Centre

The largest gull's egg in the world lies directly at the gateway to one of Germany's sunniest islands, at Klaus-Bahlsen House, the restored station of the town of Usedom. This is also the location of the Nature Park Centre of Usedom Island. History and a modern exhibition combine successfully to captivate nature lovers as well as those who are into railways and architecture. An audio-visual show gives visitors additional information on the Nature Park.

Excursions

In cooperation with its partners, the Nature Park offers a varied programme of island excursions from April to October.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

Landesamt für Umwelt, Naturschutz und Geologie
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
Naturpark Insel Usedom
Bäderstraße 5, 17406 Usedom
Tel. 038372 763-0, Fax -11
info-use@np.mvnet.de
www.naturpark-insel-usedom.de

Usedom Tourismus GmbH
Waldstraße 1, 17429 Bansin
Tel. 038378 4771-0, -18
info@usedom.de
www.usedom.de

**Naturpark
Insel Usedom**



This landscape is shaped by estate and farming villages, along with the many historical churches and the Malchow and Dobbertiner monastery. The Nature Park is characterised by extensive pine-woods, lakes, marshes, dunes, wetlands, dry grass-land and heaths. This cultural landscape has been around since the last Ice Age and, while subject to human influence, has lived on through many subsequent generations.

The Nature Park boasts 60 lakes, the largest of which is the Krakower Upper Lake, which is considered to be a paradise for waterfowl. From the six lookout towers of the Nature Park visitors can enjoy the impressive landscape and observe a myriad of animal species. The names of the towers reflect to some extent what can be seen from them, for example great bitterns, ospreys, red deer, reed warblers, Reuter's Paradise Garden View and Jörnberg. Over 300 kilometres of cycling and hiking trails and 160 kilometres of bridle paths provide a comprehensive range of holiday adventures, and not only for stressed city-dwellers.

Tips about the Nature Park

Culture and Information Centre at Karower Meiler

Karower Meiler is the visitor centre in the Nature Park, the central contact point for holidaymakers and locals. Here they can get first-hand expert hints and information material, and can view an exhibition about the Nature Park as well as temporary exhibitions by local artists.

Nature trail through the Wooster Heath

Along the trail which runs for eight kilometres around the forest villages of Sandhof and Wooster Teerofen, hikers will find a wealth of information on this area bursting with forests and lakes. The starting point is the fairground of Sandhof. Every year, the end of August sees the Moorland Blossom Festival, where the Moorland Blossom Queen is chosen.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

Landesamt für Umwelt, Naturschutz und Geologie
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
Naturpark Nossentiner/Schwinzer Heide
Ziegenhorn 1
19395 Karow
Tel. 038738 70292, Fax -73841
info-nsh@np.mvnet.de
www.naturpark-nossentiner-schwinzer-heide.de

www.natur-mv.de

**Naturpark
Nossentiner/Schwinzer Heide**

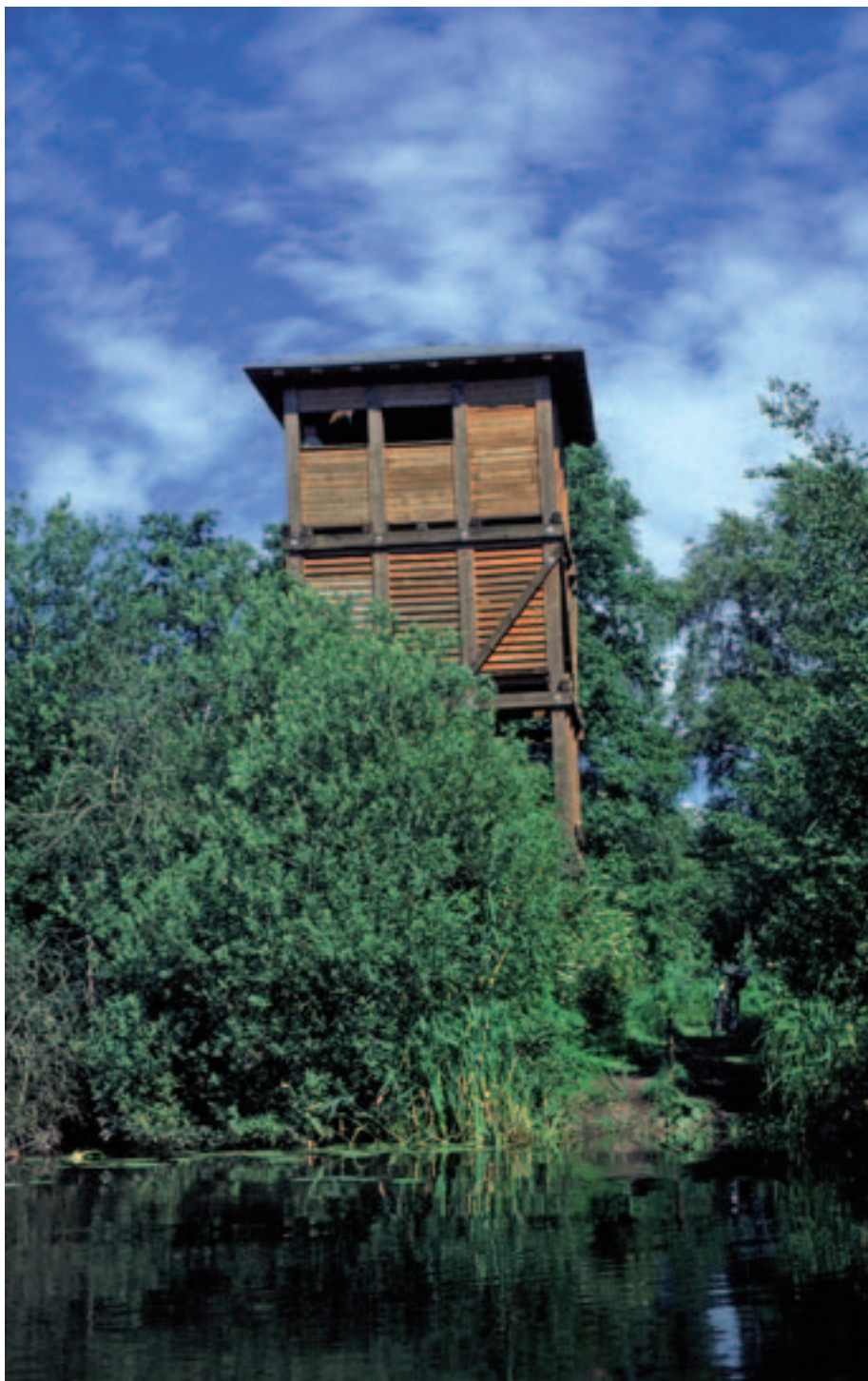


Left: Project day

Below: Observation
tower, great bitterns
in the protected
nature area of the
North Bank Plauer
Lake

Nossentiner/Schwinzer Heath Nature Park

Extensive forests – still lakes



Sternberger Lakeland Nature Park

From one lake to another



Above: Guided tour
with the Nature
Watch Team

Below: Protected
nature area of the
Sülten Salt Marsh

A land of valleys, fishers and Slavic forts – this is how many have described this Nature Park with its deeply eroded rift valleys at Warnow, many clean lakes and the many long-established fishing families. Quaint hills, extensive forests and historical highlights such as the archaeological open-air museum at Groß Raden and Großsteingräber, invite visitors enjoy walking and cycling.

The protected areas of the Nature Park are an Eldorado for waders and waterfowl. Sea eagles and osprey are often sighted, which is why the protected area of the Upahler-Lenzener Lake is home to one of the oldest known osprey nests in the whole of Germany. The lakes and rivers also have an impressively rich range of fish and mussel species. In the Warnow River area, for example, discoveries include small thick-shelled river mussels, sea trout, river lampreys, brook lampreys, catfish and minnows.

It is also worth visiting the Sternberger Lakeland Nature Park Centre in Warin with its exciting exhibition.

Tips about the Nature Park

Excursions in the Sternberger Lakeland Nature Park

The Sternberger Lakeland Nature Park offers excursions with the Nature Watch Team on request throughout the entire Nature Park area. No matter whether you are looking for guided hikes for tourists or project days for school classes, e.g. with the 'Entdeckerwesten' (explorer vests), there is something for everyone. Please make arrangements with the Nature Park.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

Landesamt für Umwelt, Naturschutz und Geologie
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
Naturpark Sternberger Seenland
Am Markt 1
19417 Warin
Tel. 038482 22059, Fax -22342
info-ssl@np.mvnet.de
www.np-sternberger-seenland.de

www.natur-mv.de

**Naturpark
Sternberger Seenland**





What the Nature Parks offer

*Good for Health, the Mind
and Society*

Nature Parks provide access to nature and recreation. They are ideal places for walking, hiking and enjoying winter sports. However, the natural world can only be preserved when there is a broad social and political consensus on the need to protect it, and such agreement requires full awareness of their value.

Volunteering in parks – work carried out in the Harz



Leisure activities in the Waldnaab Valley



One of the tasks of the Nature Parks is to ensure this knowledge is disseminated via educational work to both children and adults. This work involves not only full-time nature guides and rangers, but also many volunteer assistants.

The rustling of trees in the summer wind, the crunching of shoes on a virgin layer of snow or the clattering sound of horses' hooves – this is how nature can be enjoyed. To ensure visitors to the Nature Parks get their personal natural experience, every person can have their own individual physical programme – from hiking to mountain biking and Nordic walking to climbing courses. There is also the opportunity to discover natural and cultural landscapes in a most unusual way, for example in the Nature Park Uckermark Lakes.

What was formerly a railway track now serves as a cycle-handcar route between Templin and Fürstenberg/Havel. Those enjoying the journey experience a beautiful and varied tour along the rails between the forests and lakes of Brandenburg and, of course, you can stop off at any time, for example, to spend some time at the 'small church on the green' in Alte Placht or to visit Santa Claus in Himmelpfort, or even take a refreshing bathe in a lake.

If we continue in a westerly direction, to the region surrounding Osnabrück, we come to the TERRA.vita Nature Park, which is also a perfect example of how the activities of Nature Parks can be both sporting and informative: 2,300 kilometres of long distance trails and circular walks show the romantic landscape in all its facets. Those who prefer to get about a bit more rapidly may prefer the 1,500-kilometre long network of cycle trails. Or how about continuing the journey on horseback, or by kayak or canoe? Visitors who want to see everything can opt for a ride in a hot air balloon. For another kind of overview, look no further than the comprehensive database on the environmental education packages around the Nature Park.

It helps you seek out places, themes and events throughout the Nature Park and get details on the same. This level of service means a lot of work, which is why the Nature Park collaborates with EUROPARC Germany on the programme 'Volunteering in parks'. This programme involves over 40 National Natural Landscapes in Germany, which give volunteer helpers the chance to contribute time to practical work protecting species and habitats, nature observations, public relations and environmental education, checking and maintaining visitor facilities, and even office duties. The TERRA.vita Nature Park has a total of around 50 volunteer nature guides who are more than happy to show visitors the beautiful natural and special features of the protected area during cycling or walking tours. The tours concentrate on various different areas, and experience over the years has shown that guests appreciate most of all a mixture of 'fun' and 'learning'.



In 2007 the programme 'Volunteering in parks' earned the 'Active Citizens of Europe Award', a prize awarded to pioneers of citizens' commitments in Europe. This also reflects the key function of the programme itself, namely to motivate people to promote the cause of valuable ecosystems, plants and animals. And it has worked! The sheer number of volunteers is impressive: in 2006 alone, all participating National Parks, Nature Parks and Biosphere Reserves had a total of 1,700 people who 'made themselves useful', and three years later the total had already grown to close to 3,000 volunteers! These growth rates can only be dreamed of in other areas of society or in business.

A key part of the work in the Nature Parks is not just that performed outside in nature, but work in education. There are innumerable events, Internet sites, exhibitions, brochures and books, which are on offer from the Nature Parks in Germany. Those wishing to familiarise themselves with the significance of the variation found in species and landscapes also want to see them. We therefore have an inexhaustible variety of nature trails, hiking paths and other trails, which are not only signposted, but also keep hikers fully informed en-route in many different ways.

A quite specific example of the original transfer of environmental education is the 'Landscape which you can hear[®]' in the Ebbe Mountains Nature Park in Sauerland (North-Rhine/ Westphalia). The web sites of the Nature Park allow cyclists to download professionally compiled audio podcasts, including music, free of charge and play them on their own MP3 players, before or during their tours. Along with special direction signs, these podcasts allow visitors to cycle and enjoy a wealth of entertaining knowledge and curiosities about nature and the cultural history of the Nature Park as they go along. Questions are also answered along the way, which very few people would otherwise be able to answer, such as 'What is a sky goat?' or 'What is the origin of the name aspirin?' Did you know the answers?

Many of the more than 100 Nature Parks have trained nature guides or Nature Park Rangers offering themed tours. Some of the Nature Parks cooperate with local schools and give them access to equipment and knowledge allowing hands-on learning in green surroundings – 'face to face' with nature!

In the field of education, one landmark project is EUROPARC's nationwide Junior Ranger Programme, which is open to children aged 7 to 12 years. One of the many examples of the work of the programme is the Hachelbich Adventure Wonderland in the Thuringian Nature Park Kyffhäuser,

Above: Junior Rangers meeting in Müritz

Below: Tried and tested cycling paths – a place for keen cyclists



with nineteen Junior Rangers meeting here regularly. They joined forces to set up a circular walk in the adventure forest, 2,000 square metres of forest which includes play equipment and accommodation. Every week children enjoy the natural world at the 'experience stations', which might be in the wild bee house, the damp biotope or the forest habitat. Right at the top of the popularity scale is, of course, the chance to spend a night in a hut in the adventure forest.

The Junior Ranger Programme involves children learning from a 'senior' Ranger about the values, tasks and special features of Nature Parks, National Parks and Biosphere Reserves. The Junior Rangers follow the tracks of wild animals; they discuss nature, history and the management of their locality, and accompany the 'experienced hands' in their work. However, the title of Junior Ranger can only be earned by those qualified as 'Freischwimmer (swimming badge) in nature protection'.

Junior Rangers can consider themselves qualified when they are capable of providing information about the significance of protected areas for conservation worldwide, the tasks, values and special features of the natural landscapes in Germany, the tasks of a Ranger, and give details of animal and plant species. There have already been many years of Junior Ranger Programmes in National Natural Landscapes. Since 2008 these initiatives have been brought together, with the WWF and EUROPARC Germany collaborating in a nationwide project. As the program has progressed, uniform standards for the educational work have been established and new developments launched in the areas of schooling, the Internet and regional work.

The work of the Nature Parks is aimed at a range of different target audiences, including sport enthusiasts, nature lovers hungry for knowledge, day trippers, school classes and families. In response, the Nature Parks offer a range of different options. To summarise, we can say that Nature Parks are places which on the one hand are havens for nature and cultural landscapes, but on the other are also conducive to boosting health, the mind and society. Come to experience and enjoy and nature with all your senses!



Above: Small
cranberry fritillary

Below: Here small
things become big!





Tips about the Nature Park

'Dandelion trail' with suburban train connection

Only 15 minutes from the suburban station of Mühlenbeck/Mönchmühle, the protected nature area of Schönerlinder Ponds invites you to enjoy the 'Dandelion Trail' as part of a discovery tour and modern treasure hunt.

Botanical forest garden, Eberswalde

This has existed since 1830. The sights on offer here include an edelweiss, an africanum, a herb garden and giant horsetail up to 1.50 metres high. Just a stone's throw away, the darkness is an idyllic setting for the former Zainhammer Mill and the Eberswalder Zoo, which received an international award in 2000.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

Verwaltung Naturpark Barnim
Wandlitzer Chaussee 55
16321 Bernau b. Berlin
Tel. 03338 75176-0, Fax -13
Np-barnim@lugv.brandenburg.de
www.naturpark-barnim.brandenburg.de

www.naturwacht.de
www.barnim-tourismus.de
www.barnimradler.de
www.barnimnatur.de
www.info-oberhavel.de
www.vbbonline.de

Barnim Nature Park

Hop onto the train, hop out into nature

The Barnim Nature Park is a large nature reserve run jointly by Brandenburg and Berlin; 5.4 percent of its area lies within the northerly Berlin districts of Pankow and Reinickendorf. It is also the only National Natural Landscape in Brandenburg with suburban train access. Here, rail and bus links provide easy access to areas far from the city.

Regardless of the direction from which you approach the geology of Barnim, as a plateau dating back to the Ice Age it stands out, to a greater or lesser extent, from the surrounding lower land. This Nature Park mainly covers the area called Westbarnim, which is adjacent to remains of the Eberswalde Glacial Valley and the Havel Lowlands.

Forests and lakes, quiet rivers and historically significant waterways such as the Finow Canal completed in 1620, inland dunes, a semi-urban irrigation field landscape which has become very popular for day trips, a sacred place carpeted with lilac in late summer and boasting villages with fieldstone and brick buildings, reflecting ancient craftsmanship – and all this just a stone's throw from the vibrant metropolis.



Above: Close but yet so far away – Berlin

Below:
Totally relaxing – evening at the Lehnitz Lake

Naturpark
Barnim



Above: Two Nordic
walkers

Below: Wilderness
hiking on the military
training ground



Nuthe-Nieplitz Nature Park

Brandenburg Mesopotamia

No other European capital can boast such a sparsely inhabited landscape in its immediate vicinity, and so richly endowed with nature, as Berlin with the Nuthe-Nieplitz Nature Park. Barely have you escaped the big city tumult when you are greeted by hundreds of hectares of land with hardly any sign of any human settlement. In the protected nature area of Forst Zinna Jüterbog-Keilberg, natural forests flourish and form a variety of habitats with dwarf shrub heath and grey hair grass. Dunes loom up, and birds like the hoopoe and great grey shrike enjoy the view. The outer edge of the wildlife area is interspersed with hiking trails, rest areas and viewpoints. At the heart of the natural expanse there are regular discovery excursions staffed by experts. The first stop to find out more should be the Nature Park Centre in the Glauer Valley at Blankensee. It provides an overview of what is on offer between Nuthe and Nieplitz, an interactive open-air exhibition, and in the Nature Park dining area the culinary offerings await your pleasure.

Tips on the Nature Park

With binoculars and fascination

Birds feel at home in the Nuthe-Nieplitz lowland, which attracts many ornithologists. Viewing towers and viewing platforms near Blankensee, Rieben and Stangenhagen allow for watching and listening – from a distance.

Learn more by walking

No matter whether you walk with or without poles: the 500 km network known as the 'Flaming Walk' gets visitors on the move with round trips of various lengths through the natural scenery. A choice of courses, jogging meetings, pole rental and eating outlets help make the track memorable: www.flaemingwalk.de.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

Naturpark-Verwaltung & Naturwacht
Nuthe-Nieplitz
Beelitzer Straße 24
14947 Nuthe-Urstromtal OT Dobbrikow
Tel. 033732 506-0 und -31
np-nuthe-nieplitz@lugv.brandenburg.de
www.naturpark-nuthe-nieplitz.brandenburg.de
www.naturpark-nuthe-nieplitz.de

NaturParkZentrum am Wildgehege Glauer Tal
Glauer Tal 1
14959 Trebbin OT Blankensee
Tel. 033731 700460, Fax -700461
www.besucherzentrum-glau.de

**Naturpark
Nuthe-Nieplitz**





Geese flying in
Altfriedland

Tips about the Nature Park

Ihlow open farms

There are places where one day is not enough to do justice to all the beauty there – like Ihlow for example. It has a mediaeval church made from precisely hewn stone blocks, the village ponds acting as idyllic resting places, the rune stone houses from the mid-19th century restored in masterly fashion. The farms in the village are open to visitors at weekends: www.offene-hoefe-ihlow.de.

Classic hike

‘Hiking Germany – Nature Park route Brandenburg Switzerland’ and ‘Nature Trail – through the ravines and gorges of Brandenburg Switzerland’: The Nature Park is a ‘hiking classic’. For example, visitors can enjoy a variety of experiences along the 21-kilometre certified Nature Park route and the 17 kilometre long nature trail.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

Naturpark Märkische Schweiz
Verwaltung – Besucherzentrum
Schweizer Haus – Naturwacht
Lindenstraße 33
15377 Buckow
Tel. 033433 158-41, Fax -42
np-maerkische-schweiz@lugv.brandenburg.de
www.np-ms.brandenburg.de

www.amt-maerkische-schweiz.de

Northmarch Switzerland Nature Park

Extensive views, wild forest and water galore

The word Switzerland tends to conjure up images of peaks, gorges and panoramic views of countryside. Even through the Brandenburg Switzerland Nature Park, a good 30 kilometres east of Berlin, has slightly lower peaks and shallower gorges, the rise and descent of many stretches is breathtaking. There is also an echo! This is a landscape in which the last Ice Age lives on at every turn, in the form of boulders propelled to this point by the ice and later used to construct roads, walls and houses, and former melt water gutters, which can be considered to be some of the ‘wildest’ spots in the Nature Park.

Almost the entire space is a designated European bird sanctuary, in which sea eagles and osprey breed. In the pond region covering Altfriedland/Karlsdorf, over 30,000 wild geese stop here to rest. The small town of Buckow, recently renamed the Kneipp health resort, was praised by none other than the personal doctor of the Prussian king Frederick Wilhelm IV: ‘Your majesty, in Buckow the lungs breathe easier’. In addition to ‘his majesty’ Fontane, Kisch and Brecht soon headed to the area abundant in forest and lakes. With the annual summer literature festival, memories of this past are revived at the Buckower Brecht Weigel House.





Westhavelland Nature Park

Flight path for rare birds



Above: Impressive – great bustards in mating season

Below: A rarity in the Nature Park – the March gentian

Water, extensive lowlands, wooded peaks and small Märkish villages give the countryside of West Havelland in West Brandenburg its unmistakable character. The region is already well known, thanks to its famous aviators. It was here that Otto Lilienthal made one of his attempted test flights. The other feathered friends come in their thousands from far and wide.

The Lower Havel river basin, one of the most important integrated wetland areas of central Europe, is an ideal resting place for Nordic migratory birds. Autumn sees up to 100,000 wild geese and 1,500 cranes arrive per day. In addition to many other ornithological highlights, the numerous birds of prey such as sea eagles and ospreys, red kite and Montagu's Harrier are just as impressive. The ruff, a strictly protected snipe bird, is the 'emblem' of the West Havelland Nature Park. Particularly remarkable, however, is the appearance of the great bustard in its last remaining habitat in Germany. Its impressive courtship in spring is a gorgeous sight to behold.

Along with the river Havel, its tributaries and numerous lakes, this Nature Park has one of the most abundant collections of water features in Germany. The Lower Havel, with its largely pristine course, is a space which welcomes beavers, otters and rare fish.

Tips about the Nature Park

At a glance

The visitor centre in the Nature Park in Milow has all the information you could possibly want on the Nature Park, the Havel, fish and fishers, migratory birds and migration times. A mobile exhibition introduces the renaturation of the Lower Havel, one of the largest European river renaturation projects. Here you can also check out tips for the best sight-seeing possibilities, or try cycling or canoeing tours, to explore individually or on guided tours.

City tours

In and around the West Havelland Nature Park lie a wealth of attractive sights such as the towns of Brandenburg on the Havel and Havelberg with its impressive cathedral, Rathenow with the optical park, the optics and industry museum, and Neustadt/Dosse with the Brandenburg Principal and State Stud Farm, one of the largest in Europe.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

Naturpark Westhavelland
Dorfstraße 5
14715 Havelaue OT Parey
Tel. 033872 74310
np-westhavelland@lugv.brandenburg.de
www.naturpark-westhavelland.brandenburg.de

Visitor Centre in the Nature Park
Tel. 03386 211227

**Naturpark
Westhavelland**



Tips on the Nature Park

Nature Park House

Here, by seeing, hearing, clapping and feeling, you can dive into a virtual world of heaths, bogs, orchards and post-mining landscape – an experience for all the family.

(Seductive) apple guided tour

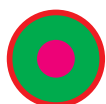
The apple will be the main player on this two-day cycling tour through the pastoral Lower Lusatia countryside: at the various stations, you will learn about fruit in general and apples in particular. The highlight is the pomological show and educational garden, where you can trace the development of fruit trees from their wild variety up to the present-day breeding.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

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Tel. 035341 615-0
np-niederlausitzer-heidelandschaft@lvgv.brandenburg.de
www.np-nlh.brandenburg.de
www.grossschutzgebiete.brandenburg.de

Naturparkhaus
Markt 20
04924 Bad Liebenwerda
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www.naturpark-nlh.de

**Naturpark
Niederlausitzer
Heidelandschaft**



Lower Lusatia Pastoral Nature Park

Captivating apple guided tours and Cistercians

The large, virtually treeless expanses of heather in the midst of the Nature Park are what gave it its name. For 30 years around 300 hectares of forest was sealed off for military exercises, which left behind grey hair-grass meadows and grasslands. These areas were finally opened up when the tanks withdrew, as gently as possible: for example, the return of pastoral moorland sheep allows birds like the hoopoe to find optimal habitats.

Almost 800 years earlier it was the Cistercian monks who rode through the forests or cleared them extensively for grazing. They irrigated river basins, constructed ponds and reclaimed the countryside. The orchards around the villages are a familiar sight in these parts. Not only are they easy on the eye, but they are worthy of preservation at the same time, since they typically reflect this cultural landscape and a habitat that is teeming with flora and fauna. This is more than enough reason for the Nature Park to hold the annual Lower Lusatian apple weeks, which attract many visitors from far afield.



Above: Heathlands – an experience for the senses

Below: 'Kremser' horse-drawn carriage tour through the landscape filled with orchards





Paddling on
the Dahme
near Märkisch
Buchholz

Dahme-Heideseen Nature Park

*Sandy heaths, pine forests and
the blue band of the River Dahme*

Just a few kilometres south of Berlin, but a world away from the hectic rush of the big city, lies the Dahme-Heideseen Nature Park. As the name suggests, its most striking feature is the River Dahme, a river with connected lake systems branching out, bordered by extensive light pine forests on sandy soil sites full of dunes. More than a hundred lakes make the Nature Park an ideal choice for outings in and around the water. From Prieros, where a Nature Park information office awaits visitors, there are two water trails into the park, one tracing the idyllic Dahme meandering its way to Märkisch Buchholz and one following the chain of lakes to Teupitz, Königs Wusterhausen and Storkow.

The latter town, Storkow, is also an excellent starting point for those wishing to familiarise themselves more with the Nature Park. Here, the reconstructed castle is the setting for the visitor centre. Its three floors house a permanent exhibition full of great insights into history and showcasing the fascinating treasures of nature which await discovery on and in the lakes, in the forests and on the inland dunes.

Tips about the Nature Park

Around the Groß Schauen lakes

On a circular walk around the Groß Schauen chain of lakes, a leisurely day is all you need to wander around the seven lakes of Heinz Sielmann Natural Landscape. The extensive reed bed and virtually impenetrable shore areas are home to countless animal species such as the bittern. In autumn and spring the observation towers and viewing points offer the particularly memorable sight of migrating birds.

Experience nature with the nature watch

Enjoy a nature watch night-time hike with the rangers to spot the Eurasian nightjars in the heath, and cycling tours to the salt flats with seaside arrow grass and strawberry clover.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

Naturparkverwaltung Dahme-Heideseen
Arnold-Breithor-Straße 8
15754 Heidesee OT Prieros
Tel. 033768 9690
np-dahme-heideseen@lugv.brandenburg.de
www.naturpark-dahme-heideseen.brandenburg.de

Besucherzentrum Burg Storkow
Schlossstraße 6
15859 Storkow (Mark)
Tel. 033678 73108
Opening times: 10 am–5 pm (last admittance 4 pm)
tourismus@storkow.de

Naturpark
Dahme-Heideseen



Tips about the Nature Park

Sights you shouldn't miss

The Nature Park contains many highlights worth seeing. These include the view of the Belzig landscape meadows with bustards viewable in winter, the Fläming mountain range with its castles and the Hagel Mountain, which is one of the highest in Brandenburg at 200.2 metres.

Recommended circular tours

The Nature Park offers a wide variety of hiking trails. Among those that stand out particularly are the international art walk of High Fläming (around 38 kilometres), the castle walk (147 kilometres, a 'Quality Walk in Wonderful Germany') and the European long-distance walk E11.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

Naturparkzentrum Hoher Fläming
Brennereiweg 45
14823 Rabenstein OT Raben
Tel. 033848 60004
info@flaeming.net
www.flaeming.net

Naturparkverwaltung Hoher Fläming
Tel. 033848 60001
np-hoher-flaeming@lugv.brandenburg.de
www.naturpark-hoher-flaeming.brandenburg.de

www.naturwacht.de
www.reiseregion-flaeming.de
www.flaeming-tourismus.de

**Naturpark
Hoher Fläming**



High Fläming Nature Park

Castles, beeches, river trout

The High Fläming Nature Park in south-west Brandenburg is one of the driest locations anywhere in Germany. This is precisely why the springs and freshwater brooks found in Fläming play host to creatures as diverse as Alpine newt, brook lamprey, brook trout and – sporadically – crayfish. The Belzig landscape meadows are among the most important conserved meadow breeding areas of Brandenburg, where even great bustards can still be seen.

The deeply eroded dry valleys, which carry water only after exceptionally heavy rainfall, are known here as 'Rummeln' and represent a unique geological and botanical feature. An additional characteristic resulting from the Ice Age are their particularly abundant erratic blocks and rune stones. There are also many beautiful fieldstone churches. The Nature Park is one of Brandenburg's test areas for a barrier-free nature experience and the chance to discover the natural world on horseback. Riders can enjoy 250 kilometres or so of bridle paths in the area.



Above: Barrier-free
Nature Adventure
Trail in Bad Belzig

Below:
The Riebach
habitat of
Bachneunauge



Right: Rare arable
weed – the corn
cockle (*Agrostemma*
githago)

Below: On the
'Kornradenweg'
(Corn Cockle Trail)



Lower Lusatian Land Ridge Nature Park

A country side full of contrasts



This Nature Park provides a contrasting experience to the neighbouring idyllic Spreewald. Up until 1991, the area was subject to large-scale lignite extraction, but today it is the location of some exciting change: where the mining left a wild landscape in its wake new forests have emerged, as has countryside spreading over more than 20 square kilometres of lakes and marshes. What had seemed dead is now teeming with life. This is proved in spring when the baby birds can be seen in the largest gull colony in Brandenburg. In summer, everlasting daisies form a yellow sea of petals on the open grasslands. In autumn, thousands of cranes and geese sleep at the newly created bodies of water. A multitude of ducks populates the lakes in winter. The Heinz Sielmann Foundation purchased 3,000 hectares to ensure that valuable habitats for rare plants and animals could be conserved. Nature lovers are invited to experience this unique area by cycling and enjoying the viewing points.

Those who like a more relaxed pace can enjoy two-wheeled tours around the idyllic Dahme Valley or hiking on the forested Lower Lusatian land ridges. The numerous fieldstone churches in the small villages are also worth visiting, as are the castles and manor houses with their charming parkways.

Tips about the Nature Park

On the Corn Cockle Trail

The cycling tour leads through the Heinz Sielmann Nature Park Centre at Wanninchen by the now flooded opencast mine to the summits of the land ridge and takes in numerous highlights of the old cultural landscape en-route: a Slavic castle wall dating back over a millennium and evidence of the former settlement. The observation tower at Borcheltsbusch gives the chance to enjoy spectacular panoramas. From here the view stretches over the bog of the same name up to the Höllenbergen Mountains where the Höllberghof manor farm is situated. The group of half-timbered houses, cottage gardens and animal parks helps enliven the rural tradition with exhibitions and events.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

Naturpark Niederlausitzer Landrücken
Besucherzentrum Gärtnereihaus
Alte Luckauer Straße 1
15926 Luckau OT Fürstlich Drehna
Tel. 035324 305-0, Fax -20
np-niederlausitzer-landruecken@lugv.brandenburg.de
www.np-nlr.brandenburg.de

Tourismusverband Niederlausitzer Land e. V.
www.niederlausitz.com

**Naturpark
Niederlausitzer
Landrücken**





View of the
Reicherskreuz
Heathland

Tips about the Nature Park

Müllrose

It is definitely worth visiting the health resort of Müllrose with its historical town centre, Lake Promenade, baroque parish church and the guest house with information on the Schlaube valley. There is also a library, a local museum, a shed with collection of historical carriages, and a centre for fire fighting installations with a hose-drying tower.

Fine dining

Many of the local restaurants in the Nature Park serve their guests the 'Schlaube Valley plate', an inexpensive dish packed full of fresh locally-sourced ingredients.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

Landesamt für Umwelt, Gesundheit und
Verbraucherschutz
Naturpark Schlaubetal
Wirschensee OT Treppeln
15898 Neuzelle
Tel. 033673 422
np-schlaubetal@lugv.brandenburg.de
www.naturpark-schlaubetal.brandenburg.de

www.schlaubetal-tourismus.de
www.naturwacht.de
www.beeskow-tourismus.de
www.neuzelle.de
www.friedland-nl.de

Schlaube Valley Nature Park

Gorse flowers and swimming fun

The Schlaube Valley Nature Park in south-east Brandenburg is nothing other than a treasure trove of biodiversity. Three quarters of all animal and plant species native to Brandenburg are found within this protected area, and some found only here. The Nature Park also boasts one of the most beautiful creek valleys in Brandenburg. The Schlaube initially wends its way like a highland brook through a deep V-shaped valley. This is the perfect setting for many species of mountain birds: the dipper which visits and the grey wagtail, which breeds here. Further downstream the Schlaube becomes a leisurely meadow brook meandering into the large Müllrose Lake. The Nature Park region was once home to seventeen water mills, some of which remain standing, while remnants of the others exist in the form of dams and concealed ponds.

The central area of the Nature Park is dominated by the heathland meadow, where the gorse flowers in May and the flowering heather at the end of August shows the very best of the countryside's beauty. Meanwhile, within the sparsely populated lakes and marsh areas in the south of the Nature Park, visitors can enjoy popular bathing spots such as the Großsee and the Pinnower Lake. A well-designed network of trails is also there to keep all hikers and cyclists happy.





Nature Park Stechlin-Ruppiner Land

Experienced land of Fontane



Above: Autumn in
the Ruppiner Schweiz
Nature Conservations

Below: Discover the
Nature Park – ideally
by bicycle

In North Brandenburg, a fascinating landscape of forests and lakes stretches out, and among the main attractions here at the Stechlin-Ruppiner Land Nature Park are the beech forests and freshwater lakes. The most famous of the freshwater lakes is the Stechlin, famous for the quality of its water, and for the novel of the same name by Theodore Fontane. The area has a wealth of fishing and bathing options, while at Lake Stechlin, wheelchair users can even enjoy a barrier-free bathing area.

The best areas for canoeing are the Havel and Rhin areas of water, which are also home to otters and beavers and under a high level of protection. The breeding density of ospreys in the Nature Park is notable, while the sea eagle can also be seen. Rheinsberg, with its castle and the related parkways, is a famous attraction and one of the cultural centres of Brandenburg. The Stechlin Nature Park house in Menz is also particularly worth visiting, with an exhibition which adults and children alike are bound to enjoy.

Tips about the Nature Park

On foot

Several interesting nature experience paths lead through the Nature Park, including the 'bog to bog' tour. It has five stations introducing visitors to different bogs around the Roofen Lake at Menz, which is also a fine spot for bathing.

Visitor information

The Stechlin Nature Park house in Menz, with the surrounding sensory garden, provides an interactive exhibition for discovering, touching and using the other senses. The visitor centre is equipped with facilities for disabled visitors, and environmental education programmes can also be booked. It also provides further information on the most interesting things to do in the Nature Park.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

Naturpark Stechlin-Ruppiner Land
Besucherzentrum NaturParkHaus Stechlin
Kirchstraße 4

16775 Stechlin OT Menz

Tel. 033082 51210

np-stechlin-ruppiner-land@lugv.brandenburg.de

www.np-srl.brandenburg.de

www.naturparkhaus.de

www.naturwacht.de

www.ruppiner-reiseland.de

**Naturpark
Stechlin-
Ruppiner Land**



The Uckermark Lakes Nature Park, which is almost 900 square kilometres in size, is situated in the middle of the undulating water realm of Uckermark. The area is bordered by the towns of Prenzlau, Fürstenberg (Havel), Zehdenick and Templin. Legacies from the Ice Age which still make their presence felt here include the many ribbon lakes, kettle ponds, bogs and typical frontal moraine ridges up to 120 metres high. The Nature Park is home to brook trout, otters, European ter-rapins and crayfish. Its emblem is the osprey, since the area has the highest breeding density of this bird in Germany. Half the Nature Park is covered by forests. The impact of human inhabitation since the Bronze Age has helped create a varied cultural landscape with hedges, coppices and avenues. The 230 lakes of the Nature Park nestle in between forests, meadows and fields. Pristine forests of copper beeches and hornbeams, oaks and maples grow in the north, and pine forests full of mushrooms pre-dominate in the south.

Tips about the Nature Park

Templin

Templin, with its historical old town and completely preserved town wall, is also the site of the Temple Natural Thermal Baths and the Western City El Dorado. Visitors can also go rail biking along the stretch of track to Lychen and Fürstenberg/Havel.

Lychen

In Lychen the rafting museum awaits, as does the chance to enjoy canoeing, hydro biking and raft rides.

Cistercians

Zehdenick, Himmelpfort and Boitzenburg contain the ruins of Cistercian monasteries and a very varied set of cultural attractions. These include Himmelpfort, which has made a name for itself as the site of the Christmas post office.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

Naturpark Uckermärkische Seen
Besucherzentrum und Verwaltung
Zehdenicker Straße 1
17279 Lychen
Tel. 039888 64530
np-uckermaerkische-seen@lugv.brandenburg.de
www.naturpark-ueckermaerkische-seen.
brandenburg.de

www.tourismus-service-templin.de
www.lychen.de

**Naturpark
Uckermärkische Seen**



Left: Small church
on the green in Alt
Placht

Below: Town wall
of Templin

Nature Park Uckermark Lakes

Where 230 lakes sparkle in the sunlight



Nature and human Culture united

An exemplary symbiosis

There are fewer and fewer regions of Germany where the original landscape is preserved: beech forests, for example in Hainich, in Kellerwald, on the Müritz or in Jasmund, which look as if they had never been seen any central European settlement. The other regions are cultural landscapes on which people have left their mark. Old churches, canals and large gardens are good examples, as well as fields, pastures, fish ponds, managed forests and even industrial plants. These bring with them villages, towns, roads and supply lines.



However, cultural landscapes are also ecosystems, and many of them are very rich in plant and animal life. But something equally noteworthy is the fact that many cultural landscapes embrace what the name itself suggests: culture and architecture. Castles and half-timbered houses, dialects, customs and legends all belong to a cultural landscape, as do handicrafts like textiles, pottery, glass art and regional dishes. Nature Parks are protected areas which try to bring the requirements of their human inhabitants, in terms of their living spaces and economic areas, into harmony with those of landscapes and conservation – as expressed in the mission statement of the Nature Parks which are members of EUROPARC Germany. As to how this task of ensuring a harmonious balance is actually practically achieved, here are four examples from very different regions of Germany.

The Eichsfeld-Hainich-Werratal Nature Park lies to the north of Eisenach in Thuringia. Its varied countryside is characterised by a charming variety of forest, meadows, fields and hedgerows and the 107 villages nestling within the area.

What guests particularly remember about this area is the interface between the village into the countryside, which is mostly still intact. Within the compact development lie farm gardens, orchards and juniper heaths, which lead right up to the edge of the forest. The villages are like a mirror of the countryside – distinguished by farmsteads in the timber-frame style with pedestals and retaining walls made of the existing source rock of Bunter sandstone and shell limestone, as well as the landscapes of the red tiled roofs.

The declared goal of the Nature Park is not only to preserve this building culture, but to integrate it into a sustainable settlement development in tune with the surrounding landscape. The crux of the task is set out in the publication 'Village development in the Nature Park', which is available free of charge as part of the public relations and education drive for sustainable development of the Free State of Thuringia, primarily to the communities and inhabitants in the Nature Park.

The publication describes building owners who make significant contributions to the preservation effort through professional redevelopment and the viable use of historical construction materials. But the scope of community building projects has also included numerous examples of successful village design, which are also cited. For those not wishing to undertake any building or invest in the Nature Park, the publication remains a beautiful guide through the unmistakable spots and landscapes of the Eichsfeld-Hainich-Werratal Nature Park.

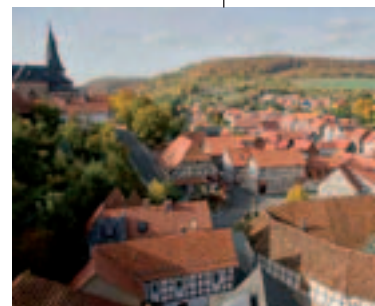


The federal state of Brandenburg is home to the Lower Lusatian Land Ridge Nature Park, a frontal moraine landscape which was formed as a result of the second last Ice Age. Marshy river basins lie at the foot of wooded peaks of the land ridges. In between nestle small villages, surrounded by fields and meadows.

The Nature Park possesses one of the largest virtually undissected areas of forest in south Brandenburg – well, on one side of the Nature Park anyway. The other consists of the vast remains of the former open-cast lignite mining site, which cover around 14 percent of the Nature Park area. More than two decades after coal production ceased, the remaining mining cavities were flooded and the level of ground water was raised to create six large lakes which are still emerging at this time.

Above: Cherry bloom
in Lower Lusatian
Land Ridge
Nature Park

Below: Typical roof
landscape
in Lengenfeld
unterm Stein





Above: Historical
'Gemarkungsstein'
(Marking stone)

Below: Small
Wippermühle
Bendeleben



There are also thirty proud examples of smaller lakes. They have emerged, in cooperation with the dunes, dry grassland and sandy heaths on the former dump site as important refuges for many rare animals and plants, which explains why the vast majority of the post-mining landscape has been declared a protected area. The Heinz Sielmann Foundation has purchased more than 3,000 hectares to safeguard the valuable expanses. The Nature Park Management and its partners are now bringing this changing countryside to life.

Viewing points and cycle trails were already being established during the clean-up phase. In the only remaining house on the excavated site of Wanninchen, on the edge of the existing Schlabendorf Lake, the Heinz Sielmann Nature Park Centre at Wanninchen is an information centre open to visitors. It provides information about the history of the region and allows in-depth insights into how the landscape developed.

A stone's throw from there is the Lower Lusatian Heath Nature Park where there is ample opportunity to discover how the conversion of the natural countryside into a cultural landscape was not confined to the 19th and 20th centuries. Cistercian monks rode through forests after the 12th century and cleared them by intensive grazing, irrigated river basins, established fish ponds and domesticated the surrounding countryside. Many churches in the north of the Nature Park date back to this period.

Later, the region was also the site for open-cast lignite mining, but the key factor in transforming the landscape was its use as a large military training centre, while at the same time it remained a reserve in which biodiversity was protected. The orchards around the villages are a familiar sight here. Not only are they visually appealing, but they are also worth preserving, since they are so typical of this cultural landscape and home to many varieties of apples which have become rare. This is why the Nature Park celebrates the annual Lower Lusatian apple weeks. The programme is as varied as the varieties of apples themselves: you can go hiking and cycling through the orchard meadows, try freshly pressed apple juice and freshly cooked apple dishes, familiarise yourself with 100 different varieties of apples and have the fruit you bring along analysed – with all this on offer, it is no wonder that many guests are also attracted from outside the region.

The Bavarian Forest Nature Park offers visitors a varied landscape which is the product of small-scale farming and natural agricultural usage over previous centuries. A by-product of the extensive agriculture and forestry was the preservation of habitats for animals and plants, and often the establishment of new ones. Structural changes in agriculture have meant that these 'unproductive' areas, which are often difficult to cultivate, are now under threat, along with all their biotopes and the species that live in them. They are either afforested or allowed to lie fallow, which has an adverse effect on the quality of the habitat for many specially adapted varieties of animals and plants.



Lovingly restored –
the Vatterode House

The Nature Parks bring together humans and institutions, to preserve and promote multiple areas of landscape deserving of protection.

Within the Nature Park, farmers are given incentives to keep ploughing these hard-to-maintain biotopes regularly, e.g. wetland meadows or neglected grassland, or to re-nature afforested creek valleys or bogs in the interests of preservation. These offers are enthusiastically accepted by many farmers, since within the Bavarian Forest, a setting in which the agricultural economy has had to tackle massive structural problems, this 'landscape maintenance' represents a valuable source of extra income. The Bavarian Forest Nature Park also acts here not only as a conservationist, but at the same time as a competent point of contact, organiser and promoter of such sustainable regional development.

The role to which the Bavarian Forest Nature Park has devoted itself is also one that has been taken up by many other Nature Parks in Germany: they bring together humans and institutions, to preserve and promote multiple areas of landscape deserving of protection.

Windfalls in front
of Kyffhäuser



Experience nature
with the Forest Day
excursion



Münden Nature Park

Forest, water and the Weser renaissance



The Münden Nature Park e.V. (a registered society) is the second-oldest Nature Park in Lower Saxony. With the Kaufunger Forest and the Bramwald, its area encompasses a varied highland landscape which is characterised by the transformation of extensive mixed beech forests, rippling brooks and charming meadowed valleys. This area is home to rare species of animals and plants such as the kingfisher, black stork and orchids. From the Hohen Hagen mountain on the Dransfeld plateau one has a superb panoramic view reaching right up to Harz on a clear day.

The monasteries of Bursfelde, Mariengarten and Hilwartshausen and many smaller town boundaries are evidence of an exciting and varied cultural history. Small former fishing villages, rafting points, charcoal kilns and glassworks reflect the centuries-old economic activities of the people native to this region.

Tips about the Nature Park

Hiking for little ones – Tingle-play-ant trail

Hunters, gatherers, gatekeepers, brood carers, child nurses, queen and workers – you can also expect exciting nature experiences on the ant trail. Whether they are on a guided tour or walking alone – equipped with the relevant brochure, young and old nature lovers alike will find that this nature trail gives them a fascinating insight into the multifaceted organised life of ants. Motorway exit A 7 Hann. Münden-Lutterberg.

Nature Park Station for children

At the nature experience stations along the Mother Hulda Path, Klusteich above Hann is the setting for Mündens pond and brook discoveries, while Totholz is the place to find out more about forest life, bats and hunting. Above the Weser village of Hemeln, Mother Hulda invites you to enjoy the deckchairs which will magically spirit away both the young and not so young to a world of myths and legends.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

Naturpark Münden e. V.
Böttcherstraße 3
34346 Hann. Münden
Tel. 05541 75259
www.naturpark-muenden.de

www.goettingerland.de
www.hann.muenden-tourismus.de

**Naturpark
Münden**



The Elbhöhen-Wendland Nature Park stands out for its virgin forests, heath, flowing waters, meadows and pastures. Other particularly prominent features include the varied hilly landscape of the Drawehn, the former imperial hunting ground of Gohrde, the Gartower Forest and the Nemitzer Heath. All these sites encompass a potpourri of culture, art and music. Among the favourite leisure activities enjoyed here in the Nature Park are cycling, hiking and riding.

Reddebeitz and Meuchefitz, Mammoißel and Tolstefanz – these words are evocative of a magic incantation, but are actually place names which particularly characterise the Nature Park. They are evidence of a Slavic settlement, traces of which still remain today. But it is not just the village names that stand out, but their shape as well: they are round. Hence the suitable appellation for such settlements: Rundlingsdorf (round village).



Art exhibition during the 'Kulturelle Landparty' (Cultural Country Outing)

Elbhöhen-Wendland Nature Park

*Around the Rundlings villages –
on the trail of the Slavs*

Tips about the Nature Park

Wendlandhof Lübeln Rundlings Museum

In the Rundlings Museum, 18 'experience stations' bring to life those who lived around two centuries ago. The year-round activities include action days, markets, handicraft demonstrations, exhibitions as well as a varied programme for children and offerings for young people (www.rundlings-museum.de).

Cultural Country Outing

The Cultural Country Outing is a cultural event hosted annually in over 80 villages between Ascension Day and Whitsun. As part of the cultural outing, artists and craftspeople hold open house and present their work (www.kulturelle-landpartie.de).

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

Naturpark Elbhöhen-Wendland
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29439 Lüchow (Wendland)
Tel. 05841 120540, Fax -120509
naturpark@luechow-dannenberg.de
www.naturpark-elbhoehen-wendland.de

Elbtalaue-Wendland Touristik
Rundling Lübeln 2
29482 Küsten
Tel. 05841 9629-0, Fax -29
info@elbtalaue-wendland.de
www.elbtalaue-wendland.de

**Naturpark
Elbhöhen-Wendland**



TERRA.vita Nature Park and Geopark

Experience 300 million years of geology live



Above: Dinosaurs
use to roam the
TERRA.vita...

Below: ... and
left their footprints

Situated among Osnabrück, Bielefeld and Minden, TERRA.vita showcases a fascinating landscape: the northern Teutoburg Forest, the Wiehengebirge and the Ankum Peaks are all contained within the boundaries of the Nature Park and Geopark. The Geopark allows you to experience and understand 300 million years of geology: the incredible variety of the countryside is rooted in constant change, each era having left traces behind. These traces include sea beds which have expanded into rigid crests, tropical forests compressed to form anthracite, and entire mountain ridges surrounded by enormous glaciers. It is unbelievable what the stones can tell us as witnesses to everything.

And today? The Nature Park focuses on the fact that the rights of nature can be acknowledged without necessarily having to exclude humans. In cooperation with partners, a network of hiking and cycle paths has been provided so that visitors can experience the countryside. There are many options, such as dinosaur tracks, the Varus Battle and the Dörenther Cliffs.

Tips about the Nature Park

A sporting two-wheeled trip through geology

The TERRA.trails are not normal cycle paths. The network includes 17 adventure routes leading right to the heart of the fascinating Nature Park countryside of TERRA.vita. No prizes for guessing that there is more than just flat terrain awaiting cyclists. Many forest and field paths 'spice up' the course. The programme includes geology, archaeology, mining and historical buildings. Those who are keen can enjoy really exciting discovery tours. Information booklets and maps of the sign-posted routes are available in bookshops and at the Nature Park itself.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

Natur- und Geopark TERRA.vita
Am Schölerberg 1
49082 Osnabrück
Tel. 0541 501-4217, Fax -4424
info@naturpark-terravita.de
www.naturpark-terravita.de

Naturpark
TERRA.vita





Tips about the Nature Park

Excursions

Guided hikes, the Drömling Information Centre at Kämkerhorst and the educational nature trail indicate that you are guaranteed riveting excursions packed with new things to discover. On the route leading directly to the shallow water area of Mannhausen in Piplockenburg on the Mittelland Canal, enjoy a natural spectacle all year round: a range of different duck and geese species, swans and if you are lucky, even meadow breeders or sea eagles might be spotted from the observation huts that allow you to enjoy nature to the full without disturbing it. By the way, along the Ohre and the Aller Canal, it is wonderful to experience the silence of the unique Drömling landscape.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

Naturpark Drömling
Bahnhofstraße 32
39646 Oebisfelde
Tel. 039002 85011, Fax -85024
naturpark-droemling@lvwa.sachsen-anhalt.de
www.naturpark-droemling.de

Drömling Nature Park

Land of a thousand ditches

Drömling is situated in the north-west of Saxony-Anhalt on the border with Lower Saxony. Around four fifths of the 320 square kilometre area is located in Saxony-Anhalt and in 1990 an area exceeding 27,000 hectares was declared a Nature Park.

After the last Ice Age, the Aller and Ohre rivers in the Drömling sink, which was once virtually landlocked, formed extensive paludification mires and marsh forests. The Drömling landscape in its current guise, however, is a product of human usage over the past two centuries. The extensive system of drainage canals and ditches gave the marsh dam culture and the construction of the Mittelland Canal a comprehensive network of waterways with a length of around 2,000 kilometres, hence the reference to Drömling as the 'Land of 1,000 ditches'. This integration of habitats within a confined area spawned a wide variety of plant and animal species. To date over 400 species on Germany's Red List have been identified in Drömling, which is why large areas of the Drömling Nature Park are also part of the 'Establishment and retention of parts of nature and countryside of national and representative meaning and conservation value' programme, which the state uses to promote important national landscapes.



Above: Typical species-rich meadow and rift landscape

Below: Historical important bog soil-cover cultivation





Diemelsee Nature Park

Nature and culture, tradition and modernity – all in perfect harmony



Above: In the beech forest

Below: Sailing on the Diemelsee

The Diemelsee Nature Park is dominated by the highest peaks of the Sauerland region, idyllic valleys, unique heathlands and numerous forests, alongside alternating meadows and fields. Historic mediaeval cityscapes and mysterious castle ruins are reminiscent of a long forgotten past and the Diemelsee Nature Park even has attractions underground: important fossil sites, mines open to the public and the largest gold mine in Germany offer interesting insights into 300 million years of geology.

Lake Diemelsee, after which the Nature Park is named, boasts exceptional water quality and is a real paradise for lovers of water sports and those in search of peace and quiet. Here you can enjoy swimming, surfing, sailing, rowing and trips in electric boats, or cast a line and fish in the utmost tranquillity. Amidst the wonderful nature, the Hanseatic towns of Korbach, Brilon and Marsberg also offer urban flair with plenty of opportunities for shopping and culture.

Tips about the Nature Park

Hiking paradise

Visitors to the Diemelsee Nature Park will find a dense network of excellent and well sign-posted hiking trails. On these trails, such as the upland or Diemelsteig, are pristine but still well kept, offer a unique way to experience the countryside.

Recreational paradise

The leisure possibilities in Diemelsee Nature Park are almost endless: the lagoon pool, ice rink, bike arena, cable car, beach, wildlife and leisure park, mines open to the public, wellness facilities and much more. In winter you can enjoy cross-country skiing tracks, over 20 ski lifts and conveyors, tobogganing slopes, ski schools and winter hiking trails.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

Naturpark Diemelsee
Waldecker Straße 12
34508 Willingen
Tel. 05632 401-162 oder -164
info@naturpark-diemelsee.de
www.naturpark-diemelsee.de

www.willingen.de
www.diemelsee.de

Naturpark
Diemelsee



Tips about the Nature Park

Hoher Meißner barefoot path

An onslaught of different sensations awaits your feet during a 1,500 metre long adventure journey over 30 imaginative stations on the Hohen Meißner barefoot path – fun for the young and not so young alike. Running with feet uncovered means experiencing nature first hand and gaining new impressions with every step.

Guided hikes with stops en-route

Most of the guided walking tours can be combined with a good meal, either en-route or right afterwards. We recommend 'Meißner lamb', game from our forest, and other regional treats from the Nature Park kitchen.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

Naturpark Meißner-Kaufunger Wald
Wolfteroder Straße 4 a
37297 Berkatal
Tel. 05651 952125, Fax 05657 213933
info@naturparkmeissner.de
www.naturparkmeissner.de

www.urlaub-werratal.de

Naturpark
Meißner-Kaufunger Wald



Meißner-Kaufunger Forest Nature Park

In the fairy-tale land of Mother Hulda

The landscape in the Meißner-Kaufunger Forest Nature Park offers visitors of all ages places of fairy-tale beauty, natural treasures, geological features, traces of former use and breathtaking views. With its varied range of activity, the Nature Park establishes a solid basis for sustainable tourism and regional development. Visitors can look forward to a good hiking infrastructure with currently twelve premium hiking trails and highlights like a visit to the Gustav open mine in the Bilstein Bergrevier (Bilstein Mountain Reserve). The hollowed-out path takes you 360 metres on foot into the mountain, in which the coveted copper slate has been mined since the 16th century.

Guided hikes on high quality paths to castles and fortresses, to gentians and wild orchids and into the world of Mother Hulda are hugely popular. Visitors are just as keen on the mushroom and herb tours, ornithological excursions; torch-lit walks and over 30 exciting activities for groups of children.



Above: Mother
Hulda Lake

Below: Landscape
conservation through
sheep farming



Right: Löwenstein
castle ruin

Below: View of the
Edersee from
the Europahain



Kellerwald-Edersee Nature Park

Scenic variety and wild nature



The impressive landscape of the Kellerwald-Edersee Nature Park is characterised by extensive, pristine beech forests and a cultural landscape of smallholder farms with colourful meadows and idyllic villages. An environment of steep, sun soaked slopes including the Edersee with outstanding water quality offers a prime setting for water sports and fishing.

The Nature Park offers walkers ideal conditions all year round to familiarise themselves along well marked trails with the riveting upland landscape. For example, the Kellerwaldsteig and Urwaldsteig (primeval forest trail) Edersee point up the most beautiful aspects of the region to walkers keen to experience nature and culture. Both of these steep tracks link the Kellerwald-Edersee National Park with the Nature Park. The Kellerwaldsteig is also the path linking the mountains around the Edersee to the 'Hoher Keller' (High Cellar) stretch of countryside in the south of the Nature Park.

Tips about the Nature Park

Experience nature with the park guides

Let yourself be tempted! 'Experience, get to grips with and enjoy nature and the cultural landscape' is the motto of the Nature Park guides. As well as a variety of scheduled events, individual group guided tours can be booked all year round.

Environmental education for young and old

The Nature Experience House can accommodate groups of up to 27 people in five generously sleeping quarters. You also have the choice between self-catering and requesting our catering service. Booking and information: tel. 05621 96946-0.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

Naturpark Kellerwald-Edersee
Laustraße 8
34537 Bad Wildungen
Tel. 05621 96946-0, Fax -19
info@naturpark-kellerwald-edersee.de
www.naturpark-kellerwald-edersee.de

www.erlebnisregion-edersee.de
www.edersee.com
www.waldecker-land.de

Naturpark
Kellerwald-Edersee



Tips about the Nature Park

The Nature Park and the Rhön Biosphere Reserve offer a joint programme of events in which farmers, craftspeople, nature and landscape guides, museums, information centres and communities present the countryside and cultural experiences.

100 years of gliding since 1911

On the highest mountain of the Nature Park, the Wasserkuppe, the Wasserkuppe flying school offers unique Rhön experiences in the air. The German gliding museum also offers a detailed history and showcases the development of gliding in Germany.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

Naturpark Hessische Rhön

Wörthstraße 15

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www.biosphaerenreservat-rhoen.de

www.rhoen.info

www.segelflugmuseum.de

**Naturpark
Hessische Rhön**



Hesse Rhön Nature Park

Land of the basalt knolls and the open horizons

The Rhön cultural landscape is characterised by innumerable forests, unwooded knolls and high plateaus with marvellous views, charming valleys, marshes and unique flora and fauna.

The 180 kilometre long premium trail 'Der Hochrhöner' ('The High Rhöner'), which was selected in 2010 as the most beautiful in Germany, is a particular treat for walkers – as are 20 extra tours offering consistent quality and more than 6,000 kilometres of well sign-posted hiking trails. Golf courses, cycle trails, mountain biking, climbing, horse riding, canoeing, gliding and paragliding are just some of the wide range of sports available. Eight therapeutic baths await with medical cures as well as the finest accommodation.

In the area where the states of Hesse, Bavaria and Thuringia meet, culture lovers can enjoy museums and cultural towns such as Fulda, Meiningen and Bad Kissingen. For campers and those travelling with motor homes, a stop at the Rhön offers appealing options. The gastronomic treats of the Rhön region come highly recommended.



Above: The Wasserkuppe, hang gliding mountain with 100 years of history

Below: The Milseburg, the highest peak of the Kuppenrhön





Ebbe Hills Nature Park

Where nature gives of its best



Above: Embedded in forest – the Listersee

Below: Children marvelling at an anthill

The Ebbe Hills Nature Park offers a remarkable variety of landscape and biology that goes uniquely hand in hand with a rich heritage of cultural history which can be experienced in many different ways. Against the backdrop of hundreds of interwoven features and ridges covered by extensive forests, water is held back by no fewer than nine dams. Wrapped in a forested package there lies a cultural landscape strongly influenced by the rural environs, with idyllic meadowed valleys, criss-crossed with small streams and villages with a wealth of things to see, such as the black and white half-timbered architecture so typical of the Sauerland region.

Many protected areas of European significance, including those around the Ebbe marsh or the limestone beech forests in Lennetal, promise exciting encounters with an extraordinary world of animals and plants. Hikers, cyclists and lovers of water sports will soon realise that this is nature giving us its best. Also awaiting discovery are traditional festivals, fortresses, historical relics unique in Europe, and one of the most beautiful stalactite caves in Germany.

Tips about the Nature Park

A landscape you can hear

What is a 'flying goat'? Where does the name aspirin come from? Answers to such questions are only likely to be forthcoming in one of the few projects of its kind in Germany, the 'Landscape you can hear'. With no expense spared in the production, plus a musical accompaniment and audio podcasts downloadable from the Internet free of charge, they can simply be downloaded onto your own MP3 player and enjoyed while you cycle along the cycle trail network.

Techno-ecological place of learning Wendener Hütte Museum

The Wendener Hütte Museum, a charcoal blast furnace from the 18th century, offers attractive adventures for children in splendid surroundings.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

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Naturpark
Ebbegebirge



Natural Journeys

Nature Parks as a Catalyst for the regional Economy

Nature Parks are also economic areas in which foodstuffs are produced, raw materials cultivated and workplaces established. Tourism is also a key part of the economic life. Nature Parks lend themselves to promotion as travel destinations, because for many visitors they offer great variety in both landscape and cultural history, thanks to their varied agricultural uses and settlements.

Treetop trail with
magnificent view of
the Palatinate Forest



Hiking holidays
are very popular in
Germany



'Favourite destination: Germany' is the short and sweet statement published by the travel barometer 2011 showing that the Germans still love holidays in their own country. Around a third of German citizens spent their 2010 holiday in Germany and plan to do the same in 2011. Landscapes and nature play a crucial role in this decision. The research community, 'Urlaub und Reisen e.V.' (Holidays and Travelling, a registered society), already confirmed some years ago that the holiday slogan 'Experience Nature' resonated very strongly with Germans. When a poll was taken, 79 percent of people stated that experiencing nature on holiday was either 'very important' or 'important'. Ensuring that the natural world remains intact is important for the majority of German people (84 percent) to guarantee their own happiness on holiday. These facts are also reflected in the figures for hotels, guesthouses, holiday homes and other accommodation: 80 percent of all stays are spent either in or directly adjacent to the National Natural Landscapes in Germany. These figures exclude purely urban tourism and day trips.

A look at the situation in the federal states confirms this long-term trend: it doesn't matter whether people are visiting Schleswig-Holstein or Thuringia – their priority is often the chance to enjoy nature. This explains why, in response to a survey of guests in Schleswig-Holstein, 67 percent of those questioned stated that the chance to have direct experience of nature was an important consideration when deciding on their travel destination. The same applies to Thuringia, a federal state with seven National Natural Landscapes. Around 55 percent of visitors go there because of the landscape and nature. A current in-depth overview of the possibilities for taking a break in the National Natural Landscapes is published in the brochure 'Holiday in nature. Journeys into the most beautiful landscapes in Germany', which can also be downloaded from www.nationale-natur-landscapes.de/urlaub-freizeit.

The extent of the economic benefit that can be generated by Nature Park tourism was calculated in 2005 using the Altmühltal and High Fläming Nature Parks as an example. In Altmühltal the gross turnover from tourism was € 20.7 million, while in the Nature Park High Fläming the figure was € 6.2 million. In Altmühltal this represented the equivalent of 483 jobs, and 211 in High Fläming.



Above: Regional products from the Palatinate Forest

Below: Fishing on the Malchiner Lake



Here is another example: in the Lauenburg Lakes Nature Park, canoe tourism has developed into an economic booster on an impressive scale. Here, each season up to 25,000 paddlers and canoeists come to enjoy the 40 kilometres or so of water trails of the Trave River and the Lauenburg Lakes canoeing district. According to estimates of the Federal Association for Canoe Tourism and the Nature Park, the canoeists contribute revenue of up to one million euro annually for accommodation, boat rental and all ancillary canoe-related expenses in the region.

Another forecast of the eco institute emphasises the fact that it makes good economic sense to boost domestic tourism. It states what each additional percentage point of overseas trips replaced by domestic holidays can create around 10,000 to 15,000 jobs in Germany. In this respect, Nature Parks are an absolute must when considering domestic destinations.

However, Nature Parks are viewed from an economic perspective not only as a result of their significant tourist potential. In many Nature Parks, premium agricultural products are generated which are then purchased and sold in cooperation with the regional stakeholders. One example is the Lauenburg Plates in the Lauenburg Lakes Nature Park. These regional delicacies come in two varieties – the rustic plate and the gourmet plate. They have been on offer every season for the past 16 years

and are still the number one dish, as the twelve caterers taking part will testify.

It is a very similar story in the Schlaube Valley Nature Park. Here too, visitors to the Nature Park can enjoy the regional specialities in guesthouses and hotels, where the 'Schlaube Valley plate' is on offer. The suppliers are local fishermen, fruit and vegetable growers, butchers, bakers and brewers. Their produce not only boosts the local economy, but the shorter journeys involved are also better for the environment.

Further west, in the Palatinate Forest Nature Park and Biosphere Reserve, there is close collaboration between the wilderness area administration and around 50 partner businesses which produce their goods – from wine and game to bakery products and parquet flooring – in accordance with ecological principles and also promote them jointly. A highlight of this initiative is the culinary Glan cattle days: the gastronomy industry offers this Palatinate meat dish, which is warmly received by many appreciative fans of regional cuisine. The increasingly positive resonance among consumers has sparked growing interest among breeders in this regional breed of cattle that is in danger of dying out, and has prompted some people to start forming herds.

The Nature Parks ensure added value from two perspectives: they preserve biological variety and contribute to environmentally friendly regional development.

An additional example from the world of practical business is the Palatinate Forest lamb initiative, in which 21 selected restaurants from the region join forces in May and serve lamb and goat's meat specialties. An example of a very successful project featuring cross-border collaboration is the Franco-German farmers' market organised by the Palatinate Forest in Germany and the Northern Vosges Nature Park in France. These markets have been held five times over the past twelve years, achieving a yearly turnover of around 500,000 Euro. This very dynamic Franco-German network has already spawned many project ideas – also on a personal 'level': two of the participants in the market have got married.

This look at the Nature Parks from an economic perspective shows that the German Government's national strategy to encourage biological variety is doing the right thing in striving to ensure that, by 2020, 30 percent of the country's land area will be Nature Parks. This is not least because the Nature Parks ensure twofold added value: they preserve biodiversity and contribute towards environmentally friendly regional development.

Cobblestone pavement
near Großen-Luckow





Tips about the Nature Park

Fürstenhagen Nature Park Centre

The Fürstenhagen Nature Park Centre is the ideal starting point for excursions in the Eichsfeld-Hainich-Werratal Nature Park. The Nature Park exhibition in the old water tower and an educational trail with a tree house invite all comers to rediscover nature. Group guided tours are also possible by prior arrangement.

The Leine-Werra Nature Park trail – acclaimed by the German Hiking Association

The Nature Park trail between Heiligenstadt and Creuzburg passes wild rocky barriers and undisturbed riverscapes just awaiting discovery. Divided into stretches for five days and with a total distance of 98 kilometres, this hiking path invites you to spend a week of leisure time in the Eichsfeld-Hainich-Werratal Nature Park.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

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www.naturpark-ehw.de

www.eichsfeld.de
www.hainichland.de
www.werratal.de

Eichsfeld-Hainich-Werratal Nature Park

Old border region on new paths

In north-west Thuringia, the Werra River wends its way through meadows and pristine flood plains, passing steep cliffs and breeding eagle owls. The Eichsfeld region in the north displays open plains of a coquina (a kind of limestone) plateau cleft by deep valleys. Yew trees are still prevalent in the mixed forests along the steep escarpments.

The southeast, however, is dominated by the Hainich Mountain Range with its large semi-natural beech forests. This is protected by the National Park of the same name, which is a solid component of the Nature Park. The quiet, virtually pristine atmosphere is a result of the proximity to the former border between East and West Germany, and of local people's innate awareness of tradition. Living cultural heritage can be experienced in numerous historic locations where related events are also held.

Both nature and culture can be enjoyed on the Werratal cycle trail, by boat along the Werra or on foot on the Leine-Werra Nature Park trail. Along the way, sample a wealth of edible treats from the region, which is known for its traditional sausages, fruit juices and the Eichsfeld sour cream cakes.



Above : Silence in the Werratal

Below : Eichsfelder cheese





Palatinate Forest Nature Park

Where the forest kisses the vines



Above: View of the vineyards and Castle Villa Ludwigshöhe

Caption: Castle Fleckenstein

The Palatinate Forest covers almost 180,000 hectares, making it the largest continuous forested area in Germany. Together with its French neighbour, the Northern Vosges Nature Park, the Palatinate Forest Nature Park has established the cross-border Palatinate Forest-Vosges du Nord Biosphere Reserve. Under the seemingly endless foliage a variety of habitats can be found. Many rare animal and plant species (wildcat, lynx, dipper etc.) make their homes in the forests and well-hidden creek valleys, bizarre red sandstone rocks and vibrant meadows.

Visitors find not only great appeal in the forests, the romantic villages and castle ruins, but also the chance to get a 'taste' of the entire region. Along the sun-soaked wine route, wine, speciality meats, oils, honey, mushrooms, juices and many other regional delicacies await visiting bon vivants. The Nature Park was created from a variety of hiking trails and also offers many historic sights 'along the way' such as Hambach and Trifel castle. The more sporty among you can enjoy exploring the Palatinate Forest in the mountain bike park or a spot of climbing on the bizarre sandstone cliffs in the southerly Wasgau to enjoy the view over the treetops.

Tips about the Nature Park

Nature Park stations for children

In the Palatinate Forest children can also join a discovery tour and seek out the traces of the wildcat and lynx. The non-school activities available encompass varied attractions, for example the Fleckenstein castle ruins, the tree-top path, the wildcat sanctuary in Fischbach/Dahn and the Museum of Natural History in Bad Dürkheim.

On the move with nature and landscape guides

Certified nature and landscape guides are at your service to provide internal guided hikes and help you experience the unique landscape first hand. They can tell you a huge amount about nature and culture, as well as myths and legends.

Catered hiking cabins

No other German forested area has such a large density of cabins as the Palatinate Forest. Get to know more about these traditional venues for refreshment of the Palatinate Forest Association for Resting, Food and Drink

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

Naturpark Pfälzerwald e. V.
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**Naturpark
Pfälzerwald**



Tips on the Nature Park

The garden of the senses

A living philosophy for young and old, pervaded by the elements of water, experience, earth and fire, awaits your discovery in the 'Circular Learning Garden' at Floß. Here each person has to find their own way out, otherwise the labyrinth is bound to lead you right back to where you started and you come face to face with the entrance again.

Under the spell of a grand canyon

Visitors to the Waldnaab Valley at Windische-schenbach can expect to see a stone wonder garden of nature with picturesque rock formations. Here normal street shoes are all you need for the entire stretch because it is neither dangerous nor strenuous. Plus there are suitable entry points for cyclists, disabled people and families with babies in pushchairs.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

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www.oberpfaelzerwald.de

**Naturpark
Nördlicher
Oberpfälzer Wald**



Northern Upper Palatinate Forest Nature Park

In the heart of central Europe

The Upper Palatinate Forest Nature Park is richly structured: quiet pond landscapes alternate with extensive forests, and bizarre rocky landscapes with wild and romantic creek valleys – an insiders' tip for nature lovers looking for something special and off the beaten track, and for those who want to get closer to nature or simply relax and let go. Given the deepest pit in the ground, the most beautiful basalt cone in Europe, the longest rail cycle path in Bavaria and the most beautiful castle ruins of the Upper Palatinate region, you run out of superlatives to describe it. And this is where you will also find the legendary stone.

The quality Natural Park was not granted the VIABONO licence by chance – this seal of approval is awarded to tourist attractions that are particularly oriented with the environment in mind. Also the original domestic treats are not to be missed. Lilac puree, partridge zoigl or red cattle roast from Tannesberg – there just aren't enough days for everything.



Above: Circular
Learning Garden
at Floß

Below: Castle ruin
Flossenbürg



Tips on the Nature Park

Nature Park information centres

Six information centres, including the Nature Park House in Zwiesel, the first zero energy house in Germany, and the Bavarian-Bohemian Information Centre for Nature and National Parks in the historic border station in Bavarian Eisenstein, give you information on the culture and nature landscape of the Bavarian Forest, on 'zero energy houses' and 'renewable energies', and the project for protecting species including the otter, wood grouse and lynx.

Annual programme

The Bavarian Forest Nature Park offers year-round free guided excursions and lectures given by trained biologists, foresters and geoscientists.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

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www.bayerischer-wald.de

Bavarian Forest Nature Park

Forests, meadows, old stone

The Bavarian Forest Nature Park was founded in 1967, making it one of the oldest as well as one of the largest Nature Parks in Germany. It stretches from the Danube to the Großen Arber Mountain (1,456 metres above sea level) and is home to approximately 290,000 residents, who live in 89 towns and communities in the districts of Straubing-Bogen, Deggendorf, Regen and Freyung-Grafenau. The animals and plants that live here include the threatened species of lynx, otter, pearl mussel, corncrake and the elder-flowered orchid, one of the rarest orchid species in Germany.

More than 7,000 kilometres of sign-posted hiking trails, 3,000 kilometres of cycle paths, approximately 30 nature education trails and, last but not least, a wealth of excursions organised by Nature Park employees or experienced hiking guides invite you to enjoy hiking, cycling and experiencing nature on the 'Green roof in Europe', the largest continuous forested area in Central Europe.



Above: A returned species: the otter

Below: Boundless forests, mountains and lakes

Naturpark
Bayerischer Wald





Tips about the Nature Park

Experience nature and history

Experience the variety of nature and discover the historical riches: the annual programme of both Nature Park information centres in Eichstätt and Treuchtlingen allows you to actively experience the Altmühltal Nature Park with all your senses. Numerous interesting guided tours for adults and families, as well as exciting events for children await you. Here you can go animal-watching with environmental educators and Nature Park guides, sample one of the herb tours or find out more about prehistoric animals in the quarry.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

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Altmühltal Nature Park

In the Jurassic lagoons

Mighty elemental forces acting over millions of years formed the landscape of the Altmühltal Nature Park from the Jurassic lagoons – a landscape bound to fascinate. In Ries in the western area of the Nature Park, there is even something of the extra-terrestrial: 14.5 million years ago an asteroid one kilometre across struck the Earth at a speed of over 70,000 kilometres an hour and made a crater 25 kilometres in diameter. Today you can still stand on the edge of this crater basin in the Geopark Ries and be astounded.

The region is best known as a paradise for hikers and cyclists, since in Altmühltal Nature Park one should always 'Experience nature, but only on specific trails and always in harmony with the landscape and the domestic world of animals and plants.' The environment centres of the Nature Park offer a variety of natural excursions and guided nature-experience tours. However, you can discover and enjoy the cultural landscape of the Altmühltal Nature Park just as easily on your own, for example on the various themed educational paths or during excursions to the numerous natural wonders and natural monuments of the region.



Above: Nature Park guide on tour

Bottom: Young nature explorer in the quarry





Ore Mountains/ Vogtland Nature Park

*Mining history, homeland rooms
and gentian*



The Ore Mountains/Vogtland Nature Park stretches between Bad Elster in the Vogtland region and Holzhausen in the Eastern Ore Mountains. With an area of around 1,500 square kilometres, the majority of the park is over 500 metres above sea level and encompasses some of the most prized agricultural areas of the south and south-western region. At higher altitudes in the Ore Mountains numerous plant and animal species are found which are threatened on a Europe-wide scale (e.g. great grey shrike, wood grouse, and arnica). Around two thirds of the natural park area is forested and a third is used for agriculture. With approximately 290,000 inhabitants, the Nature Park is one of the most densely populated semi-mountainous regions in Europe.

Many locations and regions in the Ore Mountains and Upper Vogtland are traditional spots for holidays and recreation. The Fichtel Mountain area has a particularly good reputation as a prime spot for recreation, with Germany's highest town, the spa town of Oberwiesenthal, the Auersberg area with the Carlsfeld and Johanngeorgenstadt Centres, the Aschberg region with Klingenthal/Mühlleithen and Schöneck, the Schwarzenberg area with Seiffen as well as the Cämmerswalde and Holzhausen areas.

Tips about the Nature Park

Historical tips

The Ore Mountains and Vogtland enjoy a rich cultural and historical heritage, indicating that there are many technical monuments in the area. Numerous museums and homeland rooms help inform visitors about the folk culture and cultural history of the Erz Mountains and the Vogtland region.

Interesting facts

The Nature Park includes abundant educational nature trails which cover a wide variety of topics, ranging from 'water' and 'herbs' to 'ghosts of nature', and varying in length.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

Zweckverband Naturpark Erzgebirge/Vogtland
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Naturpark
Erzgebirge/Vogtland



This Nature Park is situated in the east of the Thuringia Forest and is traversed by the famous Rennsteig footpath. It includes five very different natural landscapes, which collectively cover an area of around 83,000 hectares. The strongest characteristic shaping the area is the traditional slate mining with small slate-roofed towns and overgrown slate dumps. In the Thuringia Lehesten slate park, this imposing cultural landscape can be visited as a national geotope. In the Rennsteig area, the mountains reach heights of almost 800 metres. Here, too, forests cover wide swathes of land and the rare dipper breeds in well-hidden creek valleys.

The town of Saalfeld is known for having the most colourful fairy grottoes in the world, the Feengrotten. Many fortresses on the Saale celebrated in song, such as Schloss Burg, attract tourists and other visitors. The sunny Saale Valley makes a perfect holiday and excursion destination with two large reservoirs, the Thuringia Lake and the blue strip of the Saale. Thuringia, the land of a thousand ponds, is home to many species of waterfowl and also a key resting place for migratory birds.

Tips about the Nature Park

On the trail of the fire salamander – Children's path at Leutenberg

Hikers both young and old can discover the secret life of the fire salamander on a fascinating forest path. Starting at the market place, the trail stretches over more than four kilometres up to the Nature Park House, which houses a terrarium containing living fire salamanders that can be observed and admired. En-route there are many other opportunities for you to indulge your playful side.

The Nature Park House and the Nature Park Worlds

A total of three exhibitions within this Nature Park provide information on the outskirts of Leutenberg: 'Between the Rennsteig Forest and the Saale Fortresses', 'Brook habitats' and 'Adventure geology' (about the Geopark).

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

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Naturpark
Thüringer Schiefergebirge
Obere Saale



Above: Slate mining
and roof art in the
Nature Park

Below: Castle Burgk
on the blue Saale
ribbon

Thuringia Slate Mountains/ Upper Saale Nature Park

Land of blue gold





Kyffhäuser Nature Park

Quality that invites you to get hiking



Above: The Kyffhäuser

Below: Stone pendulum at the Nature Park Station

The Kyffhäuser Nature Park is ideal for hiking. Over a thousand kilometres of outstanding sign-posted hiking and cycle paths lead the way through a magnificent landscape. En-route you can also enjoy thematic trails including, for example, the Kyffhäuser Trail, a forest educational trail and the barrier-free salt trail.

If you want to enjoy the variety of the landscape and famous cultural monuments such as the Kyffhäuser Monument, the Panorama Museum, the Barbarossa Cave, the Tilleda Palace along a gypsum and karst region, the 37 km long Kyffhäuser Path is the recommended 'feel-good tip' for you. Along the way you can also expect to encounter over 300 species of birds, which occasionally include over 10,000 cranes during the birds' migration period, which flock to the European Bird Sanctuary.

Something else which definitely should not be missed is the Kyffhäuser Listening Experience, whereby along the routes, information on the history and nature around you can be obtained at any time via your mobile phone. So if you are keen to know more about the history of white gold or more on highwaymen, simply follow the directions given on the forest information board.

Tips about the Nature Park

Nature Park Station for Children

This is a place where children discover how exciting nature can be and have fun in the process. Who wants to measure their own long jump in competition with the professionals – frogs and rabbits? Who wants to try climbing through the net like a spider? Or creeping like a beetle through the hollow trunk? In the regional museum in Bad Frankenhausen, Egon Eiche is still around, an experienced wise old hand from our forest who enjoys relating exciting tales from his long life.

Excursions

The Kyffhäuser Nature Park offers guided hikes and excursions with botanists and ornithologists, which are hugely popular. These hikes can take up to 20 people by prior arrangement.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

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www.geopark-kyffhaeuser.com
www.kyffhaeuser-tourismus.de



Pristine beech forests, mountain meadows, hidden deep valleys with steep walls, cliffs and rock formations – this is what greets the onlooker on the southern height of the rim of Harz. Sink holes and karst springs, earth drop lakes and dolines, steep summit slopes, undulating landscapes and many other karst phenomena are waiting to be discovered and studied in the adjacent Harz Foothills. Spring hikes in the karst beech forests are especially appealing and will stimulate all the senses. You will encounter spicy wild garlic and resplendent hepatica. Where the eagle owl and black stork have their territory and can breed undisturbed, is also where other rare animal species can find their habitat. This is particularly true for the numerous species of bats, which find optimal living conditions in ravines and caves as well as in deadwood of the karst beech forest during both summer and winter. Here, for example, is the most important winter settling place in Germany for the endangered Barbastelle bat. In wet weather and with a bit of luck, you may catch sight of the fire salamander. Even the severely threatened wildcat and lynx can fend for themselves here, in what is a key location for them.



Fire salamander
hiding during the
day

South Harz Nature Park

*Unique Karst landscape at the
mountain edges*

Tips about the Nature Park

One of the most special experiences in the Nature Park is to take the historical Harz Narrow Gauge Railway from Nordhausen on the longest entirely steam-powered narrow gauge rail network in Germany – for example to Sophienhof, the most northerly part of the Nature Park. This idyllic mountain village nestling in a meadow plateau welcomes visitors, who can look forward to numerous regional specialities and above all, quiet relaxation.

Information on the Nature Park and on the region

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Naturpark
Südharz





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 'Nation-ale 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 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.

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.

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.





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 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 offer 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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