



RHINE VALLEY

The Rhine Valley is storybook Germany, a fairytale world of legends and robber-baron castles. Cruise the most castle-studded stretch of the romantic Rhine as you listen for the song of the treacherous Loreley. Explore the castle-crowned villages of Bacharach and St. Goar. And for real hands-on castle thrills, roll or stroll through this Rhineland's greatest castle, Rheinfels.

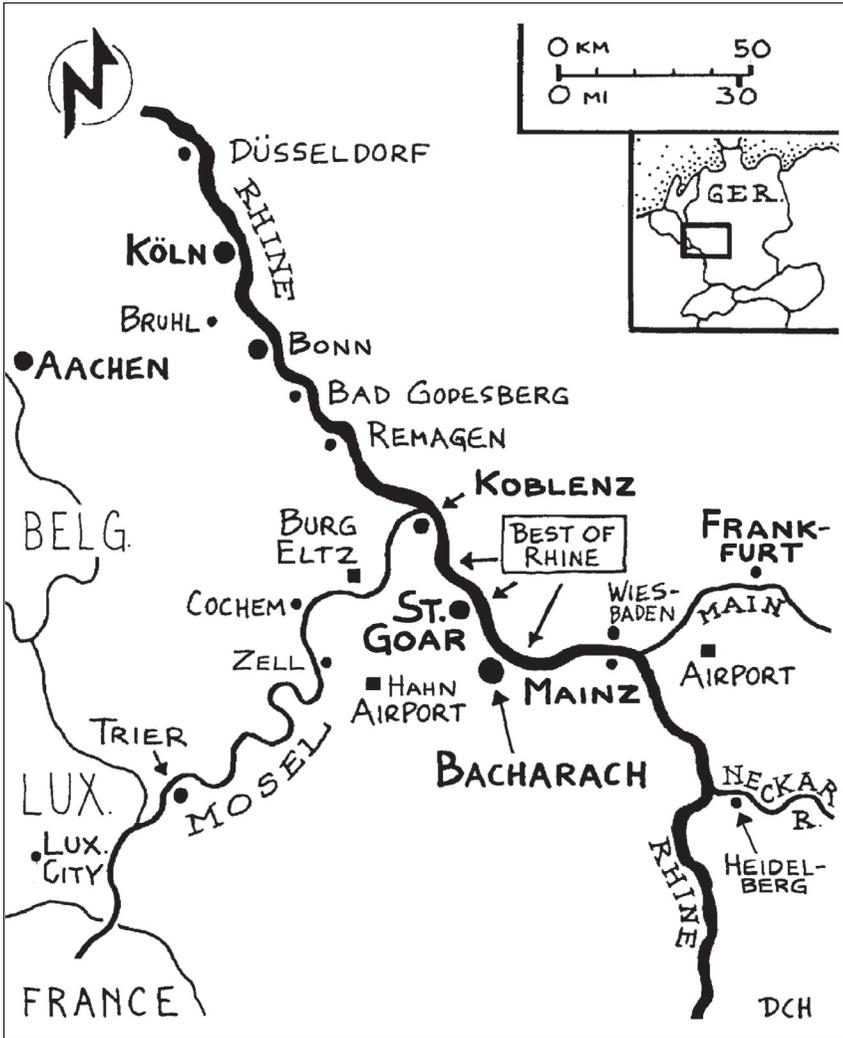
Nearby destinations—Köln and Frankfurt—offer a modern, big-city German experience, and much better accessibility than those quaint Rhine villages. Köln is an urban Jacuzzi that keeps the Rhine churning. It's home to Germany's greatest Gothic cathedral and its best collection of Roman artifacts, a world-class art museum, and a healthy dose of German urban playfulness. And Frankfurt, while not on the Rhine, is the closest major transportation hub. Many Americans stream in to and out of Europe through Frankfurt's huge airport—but consider staying for a while to check out the city's lively square and gaze at its towering skyscrapers.

Accessibility in the Rhine Valley

The Rhine Valley is the least accessible destination covered in this book. Though beautiful and enticing, the Rhine Valley presents wheelchair riders with many barriers: steep hillside villages, lots of stairs and narrow passageways, small train stations with stairs instead of elevators, and unevenly cobbled public spaces. Slow walkers have a few more options.

The big city of Köln offers the best accessibility, from the train station and hotels to its best sights. From there, accessibility goes down as quaintness goes up: Mid-sized Rhine towns like Koblenz have more

Rhine Overview



barriers, and Bacharach and St. Goar, the Rhine's most charming villages, have mediocre accessibility (especially train stations). The good news is that travelers of all mobility levels can take advantage of the valley's best experience: a lazy boat cruise down the Rhine (or, even more accessible, a quick zip along the river by train).

For a wheelchair user, the best Rhine experience begins in Köln (a convenient first stop in Germany if you're coming from London, Paris, Bruges, or Amsterdam). From there, take a train along the Rhine to Frankfurt (following the self-guided Rhine Blitz Tour, below).



Frankfurt's international airport is a convenient departure point for returning home. To add more adventure to your trip, break up the Köln-to-Frankfurt journey with a boat cruise along the best part of the Rhine. Slow walkers and more adventurous and mobile wheelchair users may want to spend more time in the Rhine's quaintest villages—Bacharach and St. Goar—and venture by taxi up to St. Goar's Rheinfels Castle. But hotels in Bacharach and St. Goar do not have good accessibility (with a few exceptions); wheelchair users may prefer to stay in Köln or Frankfurt instead, or at the fully accessible INNdependence

Hotel in Mainz (managed by the town's disabled community and convenient to Frankfurt's airport).

As you decide which Rhineland activities best suit your abilities, keep in mind that with uneven terrain and lots of stairs, the castles are tough—even for non-disabled travelers. Sometimes it's better to “visit with your eyes,” rather than go there in person. To castle or not to castle, the choice is yours.

The Rhine

Ever since Roman times, when this was the empire's northern boundary, the Rhine has been one of the world's busiest shipping rivers. You'll see a steady flow of barges with 1,000–2,000-ton loads. Tourist-packed buses, hot train tracks, and highways line both banks.

Many of the castles were “robber-baron” castles, put there by petty rulers (there were 300 independent little countries in medieval Germany, a region about the size of Montana) to levy tolls on passing river traffic. A robber baron would put his castle on, or even in, the river. Then, often with the help of chains and a tower on the opposite bank, he'd stop each ship and get his toll. There were 10 customs stops in the 60-mile stretch between Mainz and Koblenz alone (no wonder merchants were early proponents of the creation of larger nation-states).

Some castles were built to control and protect settlements, and others were the residences of kings. As times changed, so did the lifestyles of the rich and feudal. Many castles were abandoned for more comfortable

Accessibility Levels

This book rates sights, hotels, and restaurants using four levels:

Level 1—Fully Accessible: A Level 1 building is completely barrier-free. Entryways, elevators, and other facilities are specifically adapted to accommodate a person using a wheelchair. If there's a bathroom, it has wide doors and an adapted toilet and sink. Where applicable, the bathing facilities are also fully adapted (including such features as bath boards, grab bars, or a roll-in, no-rim shower). Fully adapted hotel rooms often have an alarm system with pull cords for emergencies.

Level 2—Moderately Accessible: A Level 2 building is suitable for, but not specifically adapted to accommodate, a person using a wheelchair. This level will generally work for a wheelchair user who can make transfers and take a few steps. A person who is permanently in a wheelchair may require some assistance here (either from a companion or from staff).

Level 3—Minimally Accessible: A Level 3 building is satisfactory for people who have minimal mobility difficulties (that is, people who usually do not use a wheelchair, but take more time to do things than a non-disabled person). This building may have some steps and a few other barriers—but not too many. Level 3 buildings are best suited to slow walkers; wheelchair users will require substantial assistance here.

Level 4—Not Accessible: Unfortunately, some places in this book are simply not accessible to people with limited mobility. This means that barriers such as staircases, tight interiors and facilities (elevators, bathrooms, etc.), or other impediments interfere with passage for travelers with disabilities. Buildings in this category might include a church tower that has several flights of steep stairs, or a museum interior that has many levels with lots of steps and no elevator.

For a complete listing of the Accessibility Codes used in this chapter, please see pages 6–7.

mansions in the towns.

Most Rhine castles date from the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries. When the pope successfully asserted his power over the German emperor in 1076, local princes ran wild over the rule of their emperor. The castles saw military action in the 1300s and 1400s, as emperors began reasserting their control over Germany's many silly kingdoms.

The castles were also involved in the Reformation wars, in which Europe's Catholic and Protestant dynasties fought it out using a

fragmented Germany as their battleground. The Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) devastated Germany. The outcome: Each ruler got the freedom to decide if his people would be Catholic or Protestant, and one-third of Germany was dead. Production of Gummi bears ceased entirely.

The French—who feared a strong Germany and felt the Rhine was the logical border between them and Germany—destroyed most of the castles prophylactically (Louis XIV in the 1680s, the revolutionary army in the 1790s, and Napoleon in 1806). They were often rebuilt in neo-Gothic style in the Romantic age—the late 1800s—and today are enjoyed as restaurants, hotels, hostels, and museums.

These days, the Rhine Valley is in a bit of a rut. After the U.S. military pulled out of the region, tourism took a hit and jobs became scarce. Perhaps, for the tourist industry, there is a silver lining: Hahn Airport, once serving the American military, is now a hub for discount airlines (www.hahn-airport.de). For information on Rhine castles, visit www.burgen-am-rhein.de. For more on the Rhine, visit www.loreleytal.com (heavy on hotels, but has maps, photos, and a little history).

Getting Around the Rhine

While the Rhine flows north from Switzerland to Holland, the scenic stretch from Mainz to Koblenz hoards all the touristic charm. Studded with the crenellated cream of Germany's castles, it bustles with boats, trains, and highway traffic. Have fun exploring with a mix of big steamers, tiny ferries (*Fähre*), trains, and bikes.

By Boat

While many travelers do the whole trip by boat, the most scenic hour is from St. Goar to Bacharach. If you are able, sit on the top deck with your handy Rhine map-guide (or the kilometer-keyed tour in this chapter) and enjoy the parade of castles, towns, boats, and vineyards.

There are several boat companies, but most travelers sail on the bigger, more expensive, and romantic **Köln-Düsseldorfer (K-D) line** (free with a consecutive-day Eurailpass or with dated Eurail Flexipass, Eurail Selectpass, or German railpass—but it uses up a day of any Flexipass, otherwise about €9 for the 1st hour, then progressively cheaper per hour; the recommended Bacharach–St. Goar trip costs €9 one-way, €11 round-trip;



Rhine Transport Accessibility

The following chart represents the best possible scenario for access, but some boats are more accessible than others (the boats named *Stolzenfels*, *Rüdesheim*, and *Drachenfels* are the least accessible). Call ahead to find out when the most accessible boat will arrive at the town you're interested in.

Town	Train Station	K-D Boat Dock
Köln	Level 1—Fully Accessible.	Level 2—Moderately Accessible, with shore ramps.
Koblenz	Level 2—Moderately Accessible.	Level 2—Moderately Accessible, with shore ramps.
St. Goar	Level 4—Not Accessible; twenty-three 6" steps lead down to long landing, then another nine 6" steps down to street.	Level 2—Moderately Accessible, with shore ramps.
Bacharach	Going south to north (Mainz to Koblenz), the train station is Level 4—Not Accessible (twenty-three 6" steps lead down to long landing, then another twenty-four 6" steps up to town). But if you're going north to south, the station is Level 1—Fully Accessible.	Level 2—Moderately Accessible, with shore ramps.
Mainz	Level 1—Fully Accessible.	Level 2—Moderately Accessible, with shore ramps.
Frankfurt	Level 1—Fully Accessible.	N/A

Rhine Cruise Schedule

Boats run May through September and on a reduced schedule for parts of April and October; no boats run November through March. These times are based on the 2005 schedule. Check www.euraide.de/ricksteves for updates.

Koblenz	Boppard	St. Goar	Bacharach
	9:00	10:15	11:25
*9:00	*11:00	*12:20	*13:35
11:00	13:00	14:15	15:25
—	—	15:15	16:15
14:00	16:00	17:15	18:25
13:10	11:50	10:55	10:15
14:10	12:50	11:55	11:15
—	13:50	12:55	12:15
18:10	16:50	15:55	15:15
—	16:55	16:15	—
*20:10	*18:50	*17:55	*17:15

* Riding the "Nostalgic Route," you'll take the 1913 steamer *Goethe* (**AE+A, AI, AT**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible), with working paddle wheel and viewable little-boy-thrilling engine room (departing Koblenz at 9:00 and Bacharach at 17:15).

half-price Mon and Fri for seniors over 60, tel. 06741/1634 in St. Goar, tel. 06743/1322 in Bacharach, www.k-d.com). Boats run daily in both directions April through October, with no boats off-season. Complete, up-to-date schedules are posted in any station, Rhineland hotel, TI, or at www.euraide.de/ricksteves. Purchase tickets at the dock up to five minutes before departure. (Confirm times at your hotel the night before.) The boat is never full. Romantics will plan to catch the old-time *Goethe* (**AE+A, AI, AT**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible), which sails each direction once a day (see "Rhine Cruise Schedule," page *TK; confirm time locally).

K-D Line Access: **AE+A, AI, AL, AT**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible. Aside from requiring some assistance boarding (which can be more or less difficult, depending on the river level—lower water

means steeper ramps), K-D boats offer very good accessibility. You'll enter by ramp, sometimes with a small gap (staff will assist). Most of the boats have fully accessible interiors, including adapted toilets and elevators. The least accessible boats are named *Stolzenfels*, *Rüdesheim*, and *Drachenfels*—call ahead to be sure you don't wind up on one of these (classified by K-D as non-accessible for boarding, with little accessibility once on board).

The smaller **Bingen-Rüdesheimer line** is slightly cheaper than K-D (railpasses not valid, buy tickets on boat, tel. 06721/14140, www.bingen-ruedesheimer.com), with three two-hour round-trip St. Goar-Bacharach trips daily in summer (about €8.50 one-way, €10.50 round-trip; departing St. Goar at 11:00, 14:10, and 16:10; departing Bacharach at 10:10, 12:00, and 15:00).

Bingen-Rüdesheimer Access: AE+A, AI, AL, AT, Level 2—Moderately Accessible. Bingen-Rüdesheimer boats are wheelchair-accessible, with better access at St. Goar (ramps only, no steps) than at Bacharach (one 7" entry step). The ramp into the boat is steep, but boat staff is willing to help. Some boats have wheelchair-accessible bathrooms, plus ramps or elevators to the top deck. Call ahead for a schedule of the most accessible boats.

By Train

Hourly milk-run trains down the Rhine hit every town: St. Goar-Bacharach, 12 min; Bacharach-Mainz, 60 min; Mainz-Frankfurt, 45 min. Some train schedules list St. Goar but not Bacharach as a stop, but any schedule listing St. Goar also stops at Bacharach. Tiny stations are not staffed—buy tickets at the platform machines (user-friendly, takes paper). Prices are cheap (for example, €2.70 between St. Goar and Bacharach).

Train Access: Trains range from Level 1—Fully Accessible to Level 3—Minimally Accessible. Some trains have wheelchair-accessible cars (including accessible toilets). Sometimes the train floor does not meet the level of the platform, so there can be a gap to get on or off a train. Ask at the station which trains offer the best access. The easiest way to request extra help is to contact the all-Germany Mobility Service Office (MobilitatsServiceZentrale) at least one day before your trip (Mon–Fri 8:00–20:00, Sat 8:00–14:00, closed Sun, tel. 0180-551-2512); they arrange assistance for train travelers, except at small stations such as St. Goar and Bacharach. Or, on the day of travel, you can get the conductor's attention to assist with boarding and let him know your destination to get assistance disembarking.

Station Access: Stations in bigger towns and cities (Köln, Koblenz, Mainz, Frankfurt) are Level 1—Fully Accessible. Wheelchair users who'd like extra help can call the Mobility Service Office (see above) or contact a station attendant. The small, quaint Rhine villages suffer from very poor accessibility at their train stations. In St. Goar (Level 4—Not Accessible), twenty-three 6" steps lead down to a long landing, then it's another nine 6" steps down to the street. Bacharach offers mixed accessibility: If you're coming from the south (i.e., from Mainz or Frankfurt), the train station is Level 4—Not Accessible (twenty-three 6" steps lead down to long landing, then another twenty-four 6" steps up to town). But if you're arriving in Bacharach from the north (i.e., from Koblenz or Köln), the station is Level 1—Fully Accessible. Arriving by boat to these two towns is the far more accessible option.

By Ferry

While there are no bridges between Koblenz and Mainz, you'll see car-and-passenger ferries (usually family-run for generations) about every three miles. Ferries near St. Goar and Bacharach cross the river every 10 minutes daily in the summer from about 6:00 to 20:00, connecting Bingen–Rüdesheim, Lorch–Niederheimbach, Engelsburg–Kaub, and St. Goar–St.Goarshausen (adult-€1, car and driver-€3, pay on the boat). For a fun little jaunt, take a quick round-trip with some time to explore the other side.

SELF-GUIDED TOUR

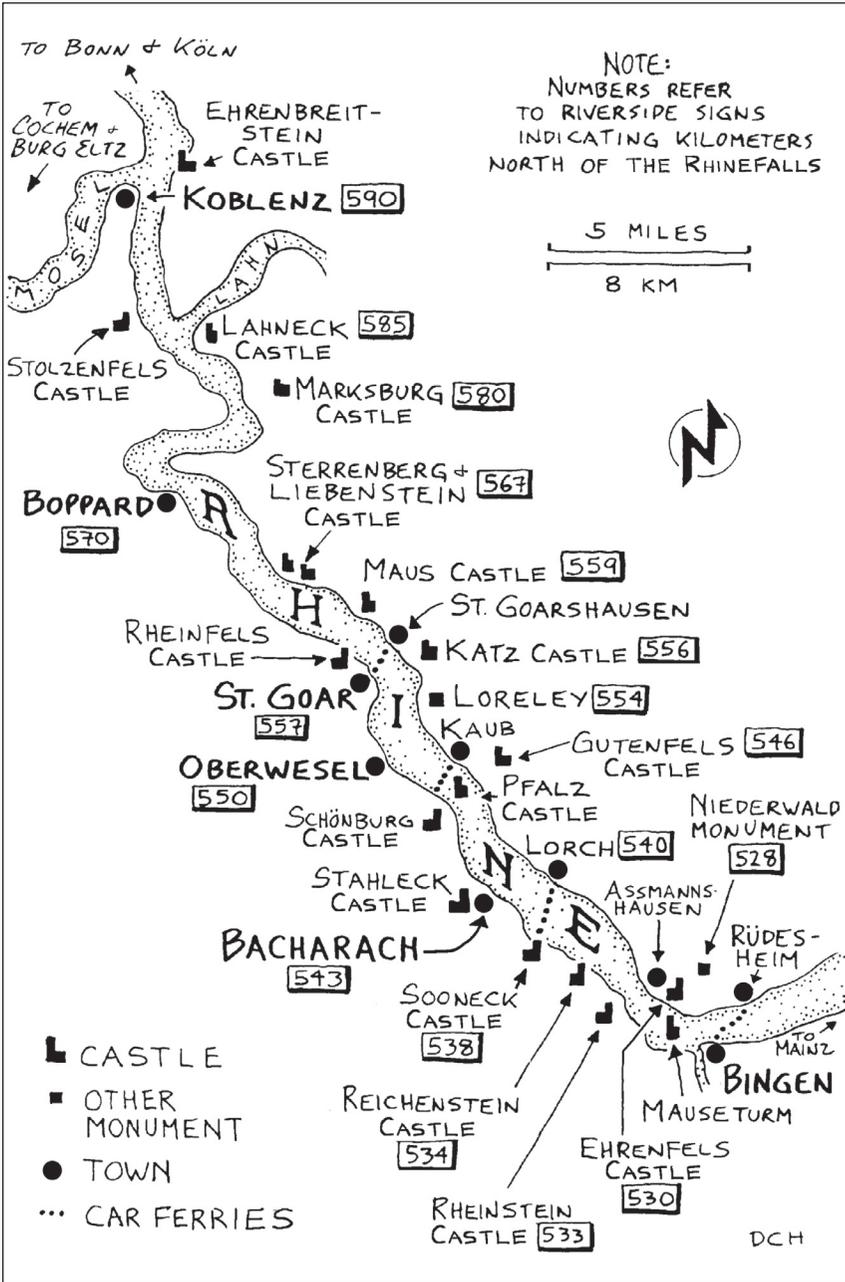
Der Romantische Rhein Blitz Zug/Schiff Fahrt

One of Europe's great train thrills is zipping along the Rhine enjoying this fast ▲▲▲ tour. Or, even better, do it relaxing on the deck of a Rhine steamer, surrounded by the wonders of this romantic and historic gorge. Here's a quick and easy tour (you can cut in anywhere) that skips the syrupy myths filling normal Rhine guides.

Sit on the left (river) side of the train or boat going south from Koblenz. While nearly all the castles listed are viewed from this side, I'll note the times when you should cross to (or look out) the other side.

You'll notice large black-and-white kilometer markers along the riverbank. I erected these years ago to make this tour easier to follow. They tell the distance from the Rhinefalls, where the Rhine leaves Switzerland and becomes navigable. Now the river-barge pilots have accepted these as navigational aids as well. We're tackling just 36 miles (58 kilometers)

Best of the Rhine



of the 820-mile-long (1,320 kilometer) Rhine. Your Rhine Blitz Tour starts at Koblenz and heads upstream to Bingen. If you're going the other direction, it still works. Just hold the book upside down.

Km 590—Koblenz: This Rhine blitz starts with Romantic Rhine thrills—at Koblenz. Koblenz is not a nice city (it was really hit hard in World War II), but its place as the historic *Deutsche Eck* (German corner)—the tip of land where the Mosel joins the Rhine—gives it a certain historic charm. Koblenz, from the Latin for “confluence,” has Roman origins. If you choose to spend some time in Koblenz, explore the park, noticing the reconstructed memorial to the kaiser. It's a six-block roll or stroll from the station to the Koblenz boat dock (or catch a taxi). Accommodations for Koblenz are listed on page *TK. Across the river, the yellow Ehrenbreitstein Castle now houses a hostel.

Km 585—Burg Lahneck: Above the modern autobahn bridge over the Lahn River, this castle (*Burg*) was built in 1240 to defend local silver mines; the castle was ruined by the French in 1688 and rebuilt in the 1850s in neo-Gothic style. Burg Lahneck faces another Romantic rebuild, the yellow Schloss Stolzenfels (out of view above the train). Note that *Burg* means a defensive fortress, while a *Schloss* is mainly a showy palace.

Km 580—Marksburg: This castle (black and white, with the 3 modern chimneys behind it, just before town of Spay) is the best-looking of all the Rhine castles and the only surviving medieval castle on the Rhine. Because of its commanding position, it was never attacked. It's now open as a museum (unfortunately, it's Level 4—Not Accessible; €4.50, April–Oct daily 10:00–18:00, last tour departs at 17:00; Nov–March daily 11:00–17:00, last tour at 16:00, tel. 02627/206, www.marksburg.de). The three modern smokestacks vent Europe's biggest car-battery recycling plant just up the valley. (If you haven't read the sidebar on river traffic on page *TK, now's a good time.)

Km 570—Boppard: Once a Roman town, Boppard has some impressive remains of 4th-century walls. Notice the Roman towers and the substantial chunk of Roman wall near the train station, just above the main square.

If you visit Boppard, head to the fascinating church below the main square. Find the carved Romanesque crazies at the doorway. Inside, to the right of the entrance, you'll see Christian symbols from Roman times. Also notice the painted arches and vaults. Originally most Romanesque churches were painted this way. Down by the river, look for the high-water (*Hochwasser*) marks on the arches from various flood years. (You'll find these flood marks throughout the Rhine and Mosel Valleys.)

Km 567—Burg Sterrenberg and Burg Liebenstein: These are the “Hostile Brothers” castles across from Bad Salzig. Take the wall between the castles (actually designed to improve the defenses of both castles), add two greedy and jealous brothers and a fair maiden, and create your own legend. Burg Liebenstein is now a fun, friendly, and affordable family-run hotel.

Km 560: While you can see nothing from here, a 19th-century lead mine functioned on both sides of the river with a shaft actually tunneling completely under it.

Km 559—Burg Maus: The Maus (mouse) got its name because the next castle was owned by the Katzenelnbogen family. (*Katz* means “cat.”) In the 1300s, it was considered a state-of-the-art fortification... until Napoleon had it blown up in 1806 with state-of-the-art explosives. It was rebuilt true to its original plans around 1900. Today, the castle hosts a falconry show.

Km 557—St. Goar and Rheinfels Castle: Look (or cross) to the other side of the train. The pleasant town of St. Goar was named for a 6th-century hometown monk. It originated in Celtic times (really old) as a place where sailors would stop, catch their breath, send home a postcard, and give thanks after surviving the seductive and treacherous Loreley crossing. St. Goar is worth a stop to explore its mighty Rheinfels Castle. (For information, a guided castle tour, and accommodations, see page *TK.)

Km 556—Burg Katz: Burg Katz (Katzenelnbogen) faces St. Goar from across the river. Together, Burg Katz (built in 1371) and Rheinfels Castle had a clear view up and down the river, effectively controlling traffic. There was absolutely no duty-free shopping on the medieval Rhine. Katz got Napoleoned in 1806 and rebuilt around 1900.

Today, the castle is under a rich and mysterious ownership. In 1995, a wealthy and eccentric Japanese man bought it for about \$4 million. His vision: to make the castle—so close to the Loreley that Japanese tourists are wild about—an exotic escape for his countrymen. But the town wouldn’t allow his planned renovation of the historic (and therefore protected) building. Stymied, the frustrated investor just abandoned his plans. Today, Burg Katz sits empty...the Japanese ghost castle.

Below the castle, notice the derelict grape terraces—worked since the eighth century, but abandoned only in the last generation. The Rhine wine is particularly good because the slate absorbs the heat of the sun and stays warm all night, resulting in sweeter grapes. Wine from the flat fields above the Rhine gorge is cheaper and good only as table wine.

The wine from the steep side of the Rhine gorge—harder to grow and harvest—is tastier and more expensive.

About Km 555: A statue of the Loreley, the beautiful-but-deadly nymph (see next listing for legend), combs her hair at the end of a long spit—built to give barges protection from vicious icebergs that until recent years would rage down the river in the winter. The actual Loreley, a cliff (marked by the flags), is just ahead.

Km 554—The Loreley: Steep a big slate rock in centuries of legend and it becomes a tourist attraction, the ultimate Rhinestone. The Loreley (flags on top, name painted near shoreline), rising 450 feet over the narrowest and deepest point of the Rhine, has long been important. It was a holy site in pre-Roman days. The fine echoes here—thought to be ghostly voices—fertilized the legendary soil.

Because of the reefs just upstream (at kilometer 552), many ships never made it to St. Goar. Sailors (after days on the river) blamed their misfortune on a *wunderbares Fräulein* whose long blonde hair almost covered her body. Heinrich Heine's *Song of Loreley* (the *Cliffs Notes* version is on local postcards) tells the story of a count who sent his men to kill or capture this siren after she distracted his horny son, causing him to drown. When the soldiers cornered the nymph in her cave, she called her father (Father Rhine) for help. Huge waves, the likes of which you'll never see today, rose from the river and carried Loreley to safety. And she has never been seen since.

But alas, when the moon shines brightly and the tour buses are parked, a soft, playful Rhine whine can still be heard from the Loreley. As you pass, listen carefully (“Sailors...sailors...over my bounding mane”).

Km 552: Killer reefs, marked by red-and-green buoys, are called the “Seven Maidens.” Okay, one more goofy legend: The prince of Schönburg Castle (*ober* Oberwesel) had seven spoiled daughters who always dumped men because of their suitors' shortcomings. Fed up, he invited seven of his knights up to the castle and demanded that his daughters each choose one to marry. But they complained that each man had too big a nose, was too fat, too stupid, and so on. The rude and teasing girls escaped into a riverboat. Just downstream, God turned them into the seven rocks that form this reef. While this story probably isn't entirely true, there's a lesson in it for medieval children: Don't be hard-hearted.

Km 550—Oberwesel: Look (or cross) to the other side of the train. Oberwesel was a Celtic town in 400 B.C., then a Roman military station. It now boasts some of the best Roman-wall and medieval-tower remains on the Rhine, and the commanding Schönburg Castle. Notice how many of the train tunnels have entrances designed like medieval

turrets—they were actually built in the Romantic 19th century. Turn your attention back to the riverside.

Km 546—Burg Gutenfels and Pfalz Castle, the Classic Rhine

View: Burg Gutenfels (see white-painted *Hotel* sign) and the shipshape Pfalz Castle (built in the river in the 1300s) worked very effectively to tax medieval river traffic. The town of Kaub grew rich as Pfalz raised its chains when boats came and lowered them only when the merchants had paid their duty. Those who didn't pay spent time touring its prison, on a raft at the bottom of its well. In 1504, a pope called for the destruction of



Pfalz, but a six-week siege failed. Notice the overhanging outhouse (tiny white room—with faded medieval stains—between two wooden ones). Pfalz is tourable but bare, dull, and not accessible.

In Kaub, on the riverfront directly below the castles, a green statue honors the German general Blücher. He was Napoleon's nemesis. In 1813, as Napoleon fought his way back to Paris after his disastrous Russian campaign, he stopped at Mainz—hoping to fend off the Germans and Russians pursuing him by controlling that strategic bridge. Blücher tricked Napoleon. By building the first major pontoon bridge of its kind here at the Pfalz Castle, he crossed the Rhine and outflanked the French. Two years later, Blücher and Wellington teamed up to defeat Napoleon once and for all at Waterloo.

Km 544—"The Raft Busters": Immediately before Bacharach, at the top of the island, buoys mark a gang of rocks notorious for busting up rafts. The Black Forest is upstream. It was poor, and wood was its best export. Black Foresters would ride log booms down the Rhine to the Ruhr (where their timber fortified coal-mine shafts) or to Holland (where logs were sold to shipbuilders). If they could navigate the sweeping bend just before Bacharach and then survive these "raft busters," they'd come home reckless and likely horny, the German folkloric equivalent of American cowboys after payday.

Km 543—Bacharach and Burg Stahleck: Turn your attention to the other side of the train. Bacharach is a great stop (see details and accommodations below). Some of the Rhine's best wine is from this town, whose name means "altar to Bacchus." Local vintners brag that the medieval Pope Pius II ordered Bacharach wine by the cartload. Perched above the town, the 13th-century Burg Stahleck is now a hostel.

Rhine River Trade and Barge-Watching

The Rhine is great for barge-watching. There's a constant parade of action, and each boat is different. Since ancient times, this has been a highway for trade. Today, the world's biggest port (Rotterdam) waits at the mouth of the river.

Barge workers are almost a subculture. Many own their own ships. The captain (and family) live in the stern. Workers live in the bow. The family car often decorates the bow like a shiny hood ornament. In the Rhine town of Kaub, there was a boarding school for the children of the Rhine merchant marine—but today, it's closed, since most captains are Dutch, Belgian, or Swiss. The flag of the boat's home country flies in the stern (German; Swiss; Dutch—horizontal red, white, and blue; or French—vertical red, white, and blue). Logically, imports go upstream (Japanese cars, coal, and oil) and exports go downstream (German cars, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals). A clever captain manages to ship goods in each direction. Recently, giant Dutch container ships (which transport 5 times the cargo) are driving many of the traditional barges out of business, presenting the German economy with another challenge.

Tugs can push a floating train of up to five barges at once. Upstream it gets steeper and they can push only one at a time. Before modern shipping, horses dragged boats upstream (the faint remains of towpaths survive at points along the river). From 1873 to 1900, they laid a chain

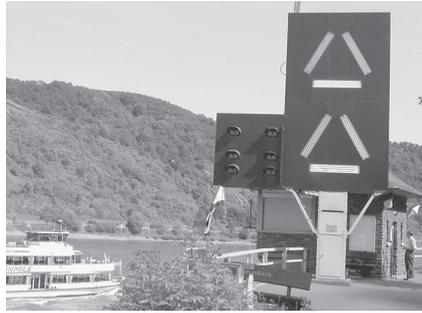
Km 540—Lorch: This pathetic stub of a castle is barely visible from the road. Check out the hillside vineyards. These vineyards once blanketed four times as land as they do today, but modern economics have driven most of them out of business. The vineyards that do survive require government subsidies. Notice the small car ferry (3/hr, 10 min), one of several along the bridgeless stretch between Mainz and Koblenz.

Km 538—Castle Sooneck: Look back to the other side of the train. Built in the 11th century, this castle was twice destroyed by people sick and tired of robber barons.

Km 534—Burg Reichenstein, and Km 533—Burg Rheinstein: Keep watching from the other side of the train to see two of the first castles to be rebuilt in the Romantic era. Both are privately owned, tourable, and connected by a pleasant trail.

from Bonn to Bingen, and boats with cogwheels and steam engines hoisted themselves upstream. Today, 265 million tons travel each year along the 530 miles from Basel on the Swiss border to Rotterdam on the Atlantic.

Riverside navigational aids are of vital interest to captains who don't wish to meet the Loreley. Boats pass on the right unless they clearly signal otherwise with a large blue sign. Since downstream ships can't stop or maneuver as freely, upstream boats are expected to do the tricky do-si-do work. Cameras monitor traffic all along and relay warnings of oncoming ships by posting large triangular signals before narrow and troublesome bends in the river. There may be two or three triangles per signpost, depending upon how many "sectors," or segments, of the river are covered. The lowest triangle indicates the nearest stretch of river. Each triangle tells whether there's a ship in that sector. When the bottom side of a triangle is lit, that sector is empty. When the left side is lit, an oncoming ship is in that sector.



Km 530—Ehrenfels Castle: Opposite Bingerbrück and the Bingen station, you'll see the ghostly Ehrenfels Castle (clobbered by the Swedes in 1636 and by the French in 1689). Since it had no view of the river traffic to the north, the owner built the cute little *Mäuseturm* (mouse tower) on an island (the yellow tower you'll see near the train station today). Rebuilt in the 1800s in neo-Gothic style, it's now used as a Rhine navigation signal station.

Km 528—Niederwald Monument: Across from the Bingen station on a hilltop is the 120-foot-high Niederwald monument, a memorial built with 32 tons of bronze in 1877 to commemorate "the reestablishment of the German Empire." A lift takes tourists to this statue from the famous and extremely touristy wine town of Rüdesheim.

From here, the Romantic Rhine becomes the industrial Rhine, and our tour is over.

Bacharach

Once prosperous from the wine and wood trade, Bacharach (BAHKH-ah-rahkh, with a guttural *kh* sound) is now just a pleasant half-timbered village of a thousand people working hard to keep its tourists happy. For accommodations in Bacharach, see page *TK.

Accessibility in Bacharach

Bacharach is a quaint, old, cobbled town—less than ideal for wheelchair users. The train station is Level 1—Fully Accessible if arriving from the north. But if you're coming from the south, it's Level 4—Not Accessible; instead, you can take K-D boat to Bacharach's fully accessible dock. For details on train station and boat accessibility, see "Getting Around the Rhine," page *TK. There are three wheelchair-accessible toilets in town: near the K-D boat dock (€0.50), in the courtyard near the Posthof TI office (free), and inside the modern post office (free).

Tourist Information

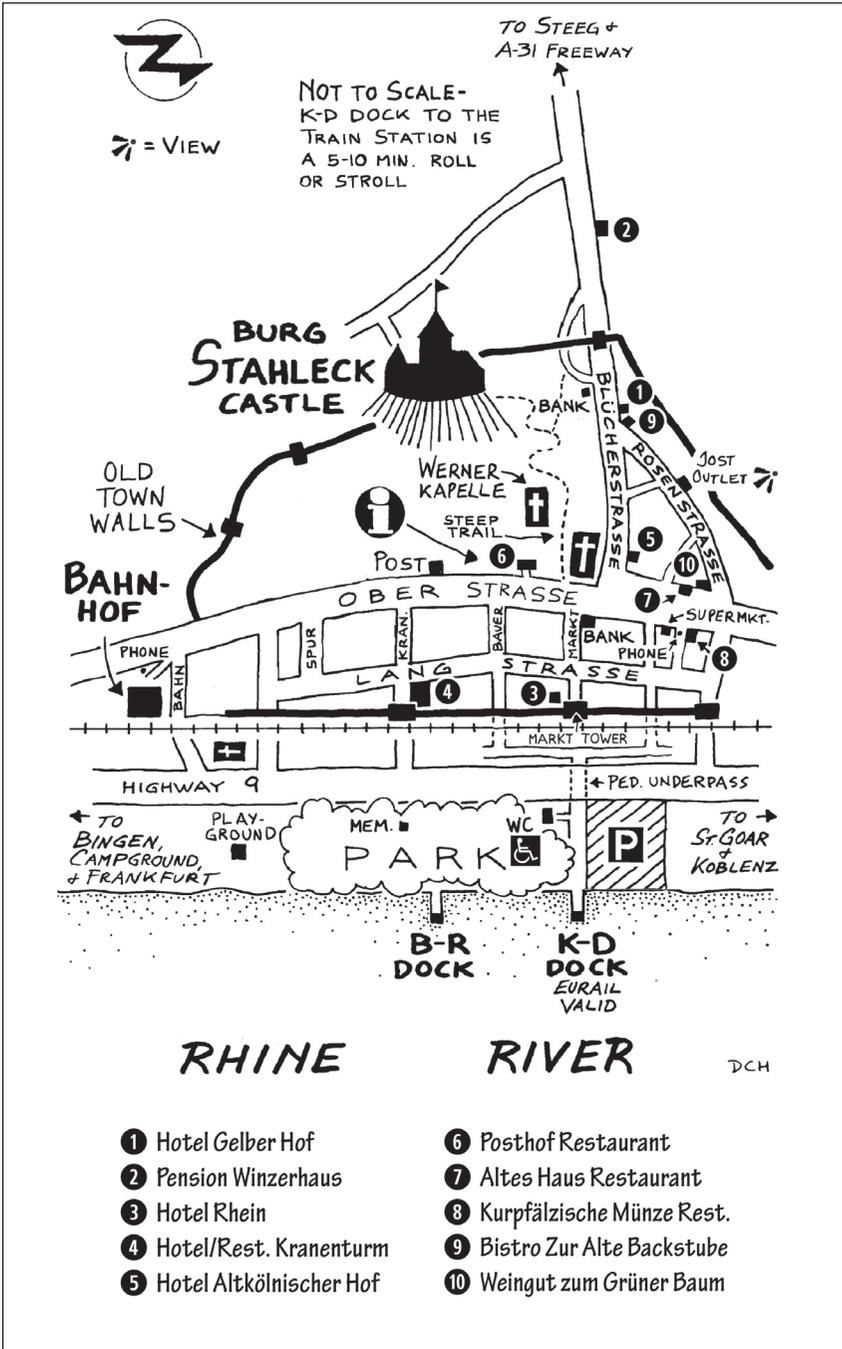
The TI is on the main street in the Posthof courtyard next to the church (AE+A, AI, AT, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, staff is willing to assist wheelchair users; April–Oct Mon–Fri 9:00–17:00, Sat 10:00–14:00, Sun 10:00–14:00; Nov–March Mon–Fri 9:00–12:00, closed Sat–Sun; Internet access—€2/hr, Oberstrasse 45, from train station turn right and go 5 blocks down main street with castle high on your left, tel. 06743/919-303, www.bacharach.de or www.rhein-nahe-touristik.de, Herr Kuhn and his team). The TI stores bags for day-trippers and provides ferry schedules. For accommodations, see "Sleeping," page *TK.



Helpful Hints

Shopping: The Jost beer-stein stores carry most everything a shopper could want. The more accessible shop (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) is next to the post office at Rosenstrasse 16 (barrier-free entryway and wide aisles; Mon–Sat 8:30–18:00, closed Sun, ships overseas, tel. 06743/1224, www.phil-jost-germany.com). The other branch (Level 3—Minimally Accessible, three 8" steps and an obstructed, narrow entry) is across from the church in the main

Bacharach



square (same hours as above and also open Sun 10:00-17:00).

Post Office: It's on Oberstrasse between the train station and the TI (AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible; Mon–Fri 9:00–12:00 & 15:00–18:00, Sat 9:00–12:00, closed Sun).

Local Guides and Walking/Wheeling Tours: Get acquainted with Bacharach by taking a tour. Charming Herr Rolf Jung, retired headmaster of the Bacharach school, is a superb English-speaking guide who loves sharing his town's story with Americans. Herr Jung is accustomed to including wheelchair users and slow walkers in his tours (€30, 90 min, call to reserve, tel. 06743/1519). Manuela Maddes is Herr Jung's back-up (tel. 06743/2759). If Herr Jung and Manuela are not available, the TI has a list of other English-speaking guides, or take the self-guided roll or stroll, described below. On Saturdays at 11:00, the TI offers a walking tour (€4) primarily in German—but if you ask for English, you'll get it as well.

SELF-GUIDED ROLL OR STROLL

Welcome to Bacharach

- *Start at the Köln–Düsseldorfer ferry dock (next to a fine picnic park).*

View the town from the parking lot—a modern landfill. The Rhine used to lap against Bacharach's town wall, just over the present-day highway. Every few years the river floods, covering the highway with several feet of water. The **castle** on the hill is a youth hostel. Two of the town's original 16 towers are visible from here (up to 5 if you look really hard). The huge roadside wine keg declares this town was built on the wine trade.

Reefs up the river forced boats to unload upriver and reload here. Consequently, Bacharach became the biggest wine trader on the Rhine. A riverfront crane hoisted huge kegs of prestigious “Bacharach” wine (which, in practice, was from anywhere in the region). The tour buses next to the dock and the flags of the biggest spenders along the highway remind you that today's economy is basically founded on tourism.

- *Before entering the town, go upstream through the riverside park.*

This park was laid out in 1910 in the English style. Notice how the trees were planted to frame fine town views, highlighting the most picturesque bits of architecture. Until recently, going onto the grass was *verboten*. The dark, sad-looking monument—its eternal flame long snuffed-out—is a war memorial. The German psyche is permanently scarred with memories of wars. Today, many Germans would rather avoid monuments like this, which revisit the dark periods before Germany

became a nation of pacifists. Take a close look at the monument. Each panel honors sons of Bacharach who died for the Kaiser: in 1864 against Russia, in 1870 against France, in 1914 during World War I. The military Maltese Cross—flanked by classic German helmets—comes with a W, for Kaiser Wilhelm.

- *Continue to where the park meets the playground, and then cross the highway to the fortified riverside wall of the Catholic church—decorated with high-water marks recalling various floods.*

Check out the metal ring on the medieval slate wall. Before the 1910 reclamation project, the river extended out to here, and boats would use the ring to tie up. Upstream from here, there's a trailer park, and beyond that there's a campground. In Germany, trailer vacationers and campers are two distinct subcultures. Folks who travel in trailers, like many retirees in the U.S., are a nomadic bunch, hauling around the countryside in their mobile homes and paying about €6 a night to park. Campers, on the other hand, tend to set up camp—complete with comfortable lounge chairs and even TVs—and stay put for weeks, even months. They often come back to the same plot year after year, treating it like their own private estate. These camping devotees have made a science out of relaxing.

- *At the big town map and accessible public toilet (€0.50), take the underpass, ascend on the ramp to the left, continue the short distance farther to the left, then pass under the train tracks through the medieval gate (one out of an original fifteen 14th-century gates). Travel across rough cobblestones for 100 feet and continue to the end of the street (Bauerstrade) over medium-rough cobblestones and an asphalt-paved street to Bacharach's main street, Oberstrasse.*

From here, Oberstrasse goes right to the half-timbered, red-and-white Altes Haus (from 1368, the oldest house in town) and left 400 yards to the train station. To the left (or south) of the church, a golden horn hangs over the old **Posthof** (AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible; free accessible toilet at back of courtyard, through middle door, and non-accessible toilet upstairs in smaller courtyard). This courtyard houses the TI and other tourist services. The post horn symbolizes the postal service throughout Europe. In olden days, when the postman blew this, traffic stopped and the mail sped through. This post station dates from 1724, when stagecoaches ran from Köln to Frankfurt and would change horses here, Pony Express-style.

Enter the courtyard—once a carriage house and inn that accommodated Bacharach's first VIP visitors. Notice the fascist eagle (from 1936, on the left as you enter; a swastika once filled its center) and the fine view of the church and a ruined chapel above. The Posthof is on a charming square. Spin around to enjoy the higgledy-piggledy building style.

Two hundred years ago, Bacharach's main drag was the only road along the Rhine. Napoleon widened it to fit his cannon wagons. The steps alongside the church lead to the castle. Return to the church, passing the **Italian Ice Cream** café (AE+A, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible), where friendly Mimo serves his special invention: Riesling wine-flavored gelato (€0.60 per scoop, opposite Posthof at Oberstrasse 48).

The church marks the town center. If you enter the church (Level 3—Minimally Accessible, eleven 7" entry steps; daily 9:30–18:00, English info on table near door), you'll find Grotesque capitals, brightly painted in medieval style, and a mix of round Romanesque and pointed Gothic arches. Left of the altar, some medieval frescoes survive where an older Romanesque arch was cut by a pointed Gothic one.

- *Continue down Oberstrasse to the **Altes Haus**.*

Notice the 14th-century building style—the first floor is made of stone, while upper floors are half-timbered (in the ornate style common in the Rhine Valley). Some of its windows still look medieval, with small flattened circles as panes (small because that's all that glass-blowing technology of the time would allow), pieced together with molten lead. Frau Weber welcomes visitors to enjoy the fascinating ground floor of her Altes Haus, with its evocative old photos and etchings (consider eating here later—see "Eating," page *TK).



- *Keep going down Oberstrasse to the **old mint** (Münze), marked by a crude coin in its sign.*

Across from the mint, the wine garden of Bastian family is the liveliest place in town after dark (see "Eating," page *TK). Above you in the vineyards stands a lonely white-and-red tower.

At the next street, look right and see the mint tower, painted in the medieval style (illustrating that the Dark Ages weren't really *that* dark), and then turn left. Wander 30 yards up Rosenstrasse to the **well**. Notice the sundial and the wall painting of 1632 Bacharach with its walls intact.

- *If you have limited mobility, end the tour here, skip the next paragraph, and read the rest of the tour for its historical detail. Adventurous slow walkers can continue, climbing the tiny-stepped lane behind the well up into the vineyard and to the tower. The slate steps (four 7" steps to a rough, narrow, uphill path, then eighteen 6"-to-11" steps to another narrow, rough path) lead to a small, extremely steep path through the vineyard that deposits you at a viewpoint*

atop the stubby remains of the old town wall. If the tower's open, hike to its top floor for the best view.

A grand medieval town spreads before you. When Frankfurt had 15,000 residents, medieval Bacharach had 4,000. For 300 years (1300–1600), Bacharach was big, rich, and politically powerful.

From this perch, you can see the chapel ruins and six surviving **city towers**. Visually trace the wall to the castle. The castle was actually the capital of Germany for a couple of years in the 1200s. When Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa went away to fight the Crusades, he left his brother (who lived here) in charge of his vast realm. Bacharach was home of one of seven electors who voted for the Holy Roman Emperor in 1275. To protect their own power, these elector-princes did their best to choose the weakest guy on the ballot. The elector from Bacharach helped select a two-bit prince named Rudolf von Hapsburg (from a no-name castle in Switzerland). The underestimated Rudolf brutally silenced the robber barons along the Rhine and established the mightiest dynasty in European history. His family line, the Hapsburgs, ruled much of Central Europe until 1918.

Plagues, fires, and the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) finally did Bacharach in. The town, with a population of about a thousand, has slumbered for several centuries. Today, the castle houses commoners—40,000 overnights annually by youth hostellers.

In the mid-19th century, painters such as J. M. W. Turner and writers such as Victor Hugo were charmed by the Rhineland's romantic mix of past glory, present poverty, and rich legend. They put this part of the Rhine on the old Grand Tour map as the "Romantic Rhine." Victor Hugo pondered the ruined 15th-century chapel that you see under the castle. In his 1842 travel book, *Rhein Reise (Rhine Travels)*, he wrote, "No doors, no roof or windows, a magnificent skeleton puts its silhouette against the sky. Above it, the ivy-covered castle ruins provide a fitting crown. This is Bacharach, land of fairytales, covered with legends and sagas." If you're enjoying the Romantic Rhine, thank Victor Hugo and company.

• *To get back into town, take the level path away from the river that leads along the once mighty wall up the valley past the next tower. Then cross the street into the parking lot. Pass Pension Malerwinkel on your right, being careful not to damage the old arch with your head. Follow the creek past a delightful little series of half-timbered homes and cheery gardens known as "Painters' Corner" (Malerwinkel). Resist looking into some pervert's peep show (on the right) and continue downhill back to the village center. Nice work.*

St. Goar

St. Goar is a classic Rhine town—its hulk of a castle overlooking a half-timbered shopping street and leafy riverside park busy with sightseeing ships and contented strollers. From the boat dock, the main drag—a pedestrian mall without history—cuts through town before winding up to the castle. Rheinfels Castle, once the mightiest on the Rhine, is the single best Rhineland ruin to explore. Accommodations are listed on page *TK.

Accessibility in St. Goar

Like other small Rhine villages, St. Goar suffers from poor accessibility. The main drag is accessible, as is the riverfront pathway. But most shops in town have a few entry steps, and none of the town's three public toilets (one at each end of town, a third up at the castle) is wheelchair-accessible.

Tourist Information

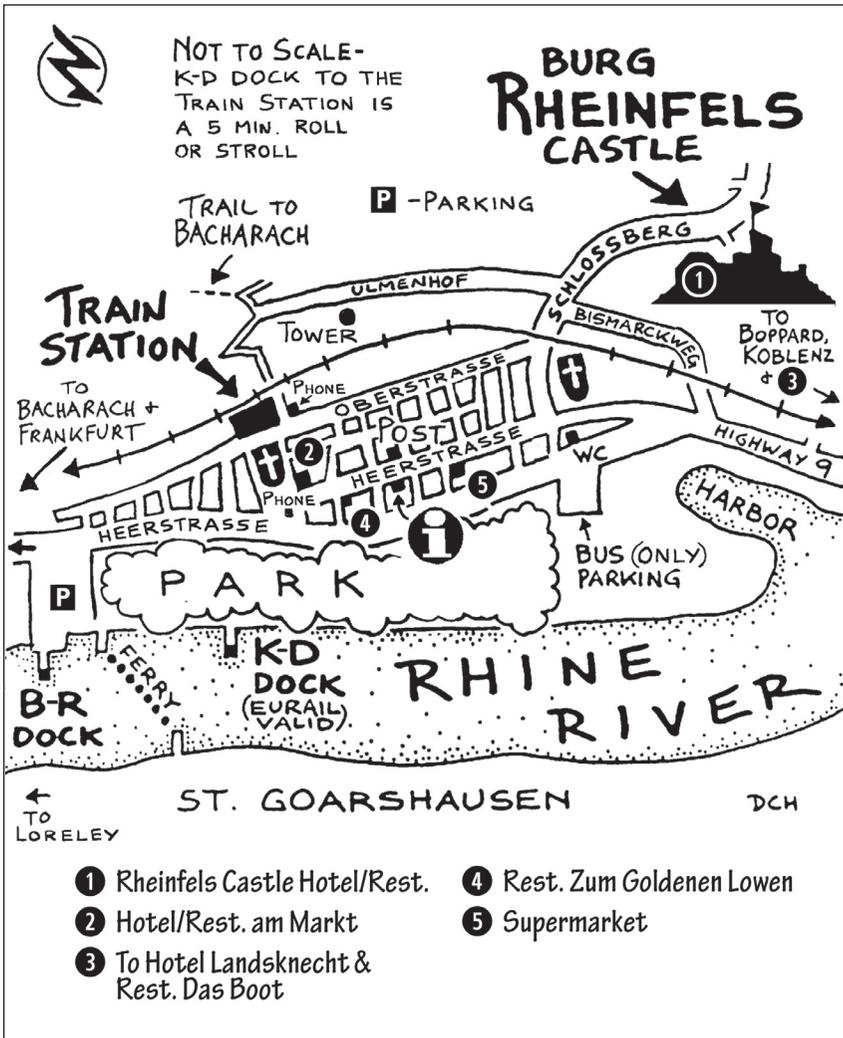
The helpful St. Goar TI (**AE+A, AI**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, three 7" entry steps), which books rooms and offers a free baggage-check service, is on the pedestrian street, three blocks from the K-D boat dock and train station (Mon–Fri 9:00–12:30 & 13:30–18:00, Sat 10:00–12:00, closed Sun; Oct–April weekdays until 16:30, closed Sat–Sun; from train station, go downhill around church and turn left on Heer Strasse, tel. 06741/383).

Helpful Hints

Picnics: St. Goar's waterfront park is hungry for a picnic. The small Edeka **supermarket** on the main street is great for picnic fixings. You can buy any quantity of produce—just push the photo or number on the scales (**AE, AI**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible; July–Sept Mon–Fri 8:00–18:00, Sat 8:00–13:00, usually closed Sun, shorter hours Oct–June, tel. 06741/380).

Shopping: The friendly and helpful Montag family runs the Hotel Montag (Michael) and three **shops** (steins—Misha, Steiffs—Maria, and cuckoo clocks—Marion), all at the base of the castle hill road. The stein shop (**AE, AI**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, one of the few stores in town without steps) under the hotel has Rhine guides, fine steins, and copies of this year's *Rick Steves' Germany & Austria* guidebook. All three shops offer 10 percent off any of their souvenirs (including Hummels) for travelers with this book (€5 minimum

St. Goar



purchase). On-the-spot VAT refunds cover about half your shipping costs (if you're not shipping, they'll give you VAT form to claim refund at airport). The Montags' teddy bear store has four 7" entry steps, while the clock shop has five 6" entry steps, with staff willing to assist.

Internet Access: Hotel Montag (Level 4—Not Accessible, stairs with no elevator) offers expensive coin-op access (see listing on page *TK; €8/hr, disk-burning service, Heer Strasse 128, tel. 06741/1629).

SIGHTS

St. Goar's Rheinfels Castle

Sitting like a dead pit bull above St. Goar, this mightiest of Rhine castles rumbles with ghosts from its hard-fought past. Burg Rheinfels *was* huge—once the biggest castle on the Rhine (built in 1245). It withstood a siege of 28,000 French troops in 1692. But in 1797, the French revolutionary army destroyed it. The castle was used for ages as a quarry, and today—while still mighty—it's only a small fraction of its original size. This hollow but interesting shell offers your single best hands-on ruined-castle experience on the river.



Access: Accessibility ranges from Level 2—Moderately Accessible to Level 4—Not Accessible. With lots of uneven terrain, steps, and levels, this castle presents a challenge for wheelchair users. But more adventurous wheelchair users and slow walkers will want to visit the castle—for the Rhine view, if nothing else—and, if you're able to go up hills and over uneven terrain, can explore quite a bit of the grounds. Even the most adventurous, though, will likely encounter difficulty with some of the castle's steep, narrow stairs and tight passageways.

Cost and Hours: €4, family card-€10, mid-March–Nov daily 9:00–18:00, last entry at 17:00, Dec–mid-March only Sat–Sun 11:00–17:00—weather permitting.

Tours and Information: The guided tours of the castle are excellent, but not accessible (instead, do what you are able of the self-guided tour, below). The castle map is mediocre; the English booklet is better, with history and illustrations (€2). If it's damp, be careful of slippery stones. An inaccessible WC is in the castle courtyard under the stairs to the restaurant entry. Information: tel. 06741/7753.

Let There Be Light: If you're planning to explore the mine tunnels, bring a flashlight or do it by candlelight (museum sells candles with matches, €0.50).

Getting to the Castle: From St. Goar's boat dock or train station, take a €5 taxi ride (AE+A, Level 2—Moderately Accessible; €6 for a minibus, tel. 06741/7011), or the kitschy "tschu-tschu" tourist train (AE+A, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, driver will assist wheelchair user in stepping up to seat, then will load folded wheelchair into front of

train; €2 one-way, €3 round-trip, 7 min to the top, daily 9:30–18:00 but unreliable, 3/hr, runs from square between station and dock, also stops at Hotel Montag, complete with lusty music, tel. 06741/2030). Slow walkers with stamina could hike up the steep hill up to the castle (dangerous by wheelchair: 18" wide sidewalk, 17 percent grade, short curved section through railroad underpass).

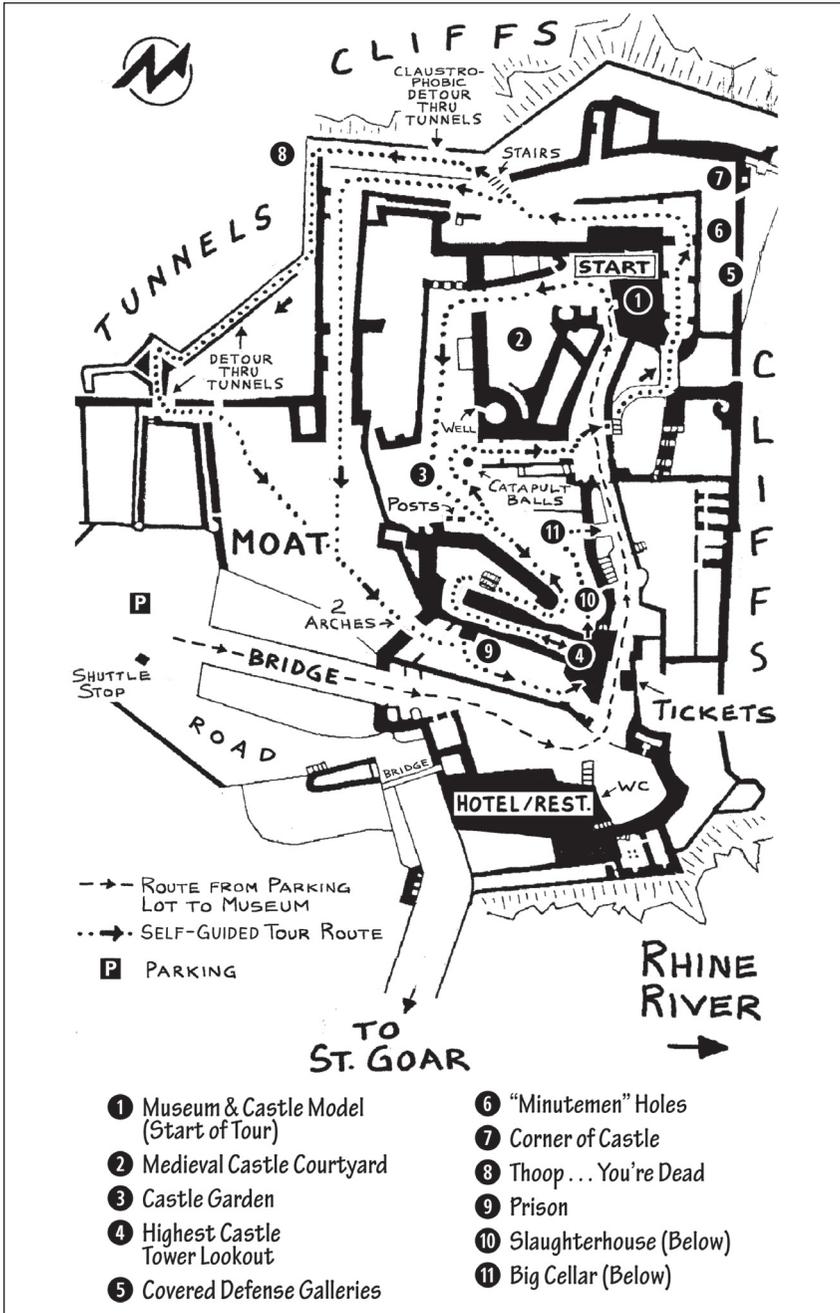
🕒 **Self-Guided Tour:** This tour was designed for non-disabled travelers, though I've provided details so that those with limited mobility who want to give it a try will know what to expect.

From the ticket gate, enter the complex (the 8-foot-wide, 14-foot-tall gate will be opened for wheelchair users). Go straight uphill, over the rough cobblestones and a rutted path. Pass *Grosser Keller* on the left (where this tour ends) and head through an internal gate past the *zu den gedeckten Wehrgängen* sign on the right (where we'll pass later) uphill to the museum in the only finished room of the castle (**AE+A, AI**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, one 6" entry step through 5-foot-wide wooden door; daily 10:00–12:30 & 13:00–17:30).

① **Museum and Castle Model:** The seven-foot-tall carved stone immediately inside the door (marked *Keltische Säule von Pfalzfeld*)—a tombstone from a nearby Celtic grave—is from 400 years before Christ. There were people here long before the Romans...and this castle. Find the old wooden library chair near the tombstone. If you smile sweetly, the man behind the desk may demonstrate—pull the back forward and it becomes stairs for accessing the highest shelves.

The sweeping castle history exhibit in the center of the room is well described in English. The massive fortification was the only Rhineland castle to withstand Louis XIV's assault during the 17th century. At the far end of the room is a model reconstruction of the castle (not the one with the toy soldiers) showing how much bigger it was before French revolutionary troops destroyed it in the 18th century. Study this. Find where you are (hint: Look for the tall tower). This was the living quarters of the original castle, which was only the smallest ring of buildings around the tiny central courtyard (13th century). The ramparts were added in the 14th century. By 1650, the fortress was largely complete. Ever since its destruction by the French in the late 18th century, it's had no military value. While no WWII bombs were wasted on this ruin, it served St. Goar as a quarry for generations. The basement of the museum shows the castle pharmacy and an exhibit of Rhine-region odds and ends, including tools and an 1830 loom. Don't miss the photos of ice-breaking on the Rhine. While once routine, ice-breaking hasn't been necessary here since 1963.

St. Goar's Rheinfels Castle



• *Exit the museum and go 30 yards directly out, slightly uphill into the castle courtyard.*

2 Medieval Castle Courtyard: Five hundred years ago, the entire castle circled this courtyard. The place was self-sufficient and ready for a siege with a bakery, pharmacy, herb garden, brewery, well (top of yard), and livestock. During peacetime, 300–600 people lived here; during a siege, there would be as many as 4,000. The walls were plastered and painted white. Bits of the original 13th-century plaster survive.

• *Continue through the courtyard and out Erste Schildmauer, turn left into the next courtyard, and go straight to the two old, wooden, upright posts. Find the pyramid of stone catapult balls on your left.*

3 Castle Garden: Catapult balls like these were too expensive not to recycle—they'd be retrieved after any battle. Across from the balls is a well—essential for any castle during the age of sieging. Look in. Spit. The old posts are for the ceremonial baptizing of new members of the local trading league. While this guild goes back centuries, it's now a social club that fills this court with a huge wine party the third weekend of each September.



• *All but the hardest of slow walkers will want to call it quits here and head back to the entry gate; otherwise, climb the cobbled path up to the castle's best viewpoint—up where the German flag waves (4 flights of stairs: eleven 8" steps, seventeen 6" steps, sixteen 8" steps, nineteen curving 10" steps).*

4 Highest Castle Tower Lookout: Enjoy a great view of the river, the castle, and the forest. Remember, the fortress once covered five times the land it does today. Notice how the other castles (across the river) don't poke above the top of the Rhine canyon. That would make them easy for invading armies to see.

• *Return to the catapult balls, head down the road, go through the tunnel, veer left through the arch marked zu den gedeckten Wehrgängen, go down two flights of stairs (twenty-five 7" steps, then thirteen 6" steps), and turn left into the dark, covered passageway (Covered Defense Galleries). From here, we will begin a rectangular route taking us completely around (counterclockwise) the perimeter of the castle.*

5 & 6 Covered Defense Galleries with "Minutemen" Holes: Soldiers—the castle's "minutemen"—had a short commute: defensive positions on the outside, home in the holes below on the left. Even

though these living quarters were padded with straw, life was unpleasant. A peasant was lucky to live beyond age 45.

- *Continue straight through the dark gallery and to the corner of the castle, where you'll see a white painted arrow at eye level. Stand with your back to the arrow on the wall.*

7 Corner of Castle: Look up. A three-story, half-timbered building originally rose beyond the highest stone fortification. The two stone tongues near the top just around the corner supported the toilet. (Insert your own joke here.) Turn around and face the wall. The crossbow slits below the white arrow were once steeper. The bigger hole on the riverside was for hot pitch.

- *Follow that white arrow along the outside to the next corner. Midway, you'll pass stairs on the right leading down zu den Minengängen—into the mine tunnels (sign on upper left; adventurous non-disabled travelers with flashlights could poke around in the tunnels). Continue on, going level to the corner. At the corner, turn left.*

8 Thoop...You're Dead: Look ahead at the smartly placed crossbow slit. While you're lying there, notice the stonework. The little round holes were for scaffolds used as they built up. They indicate this stonework is original. Notice also the fine stonework on the chutes. More boiling pitch...now you're toast, too.

- *Continue along the castle wall around the corner. At the grey railing, look up the valley and uphill where the sprawling fort stretched. Below, just outside the wall, is land where attackers would gather. The mine tunnels are under there, waiting to blow up any attackers (read below).*

Continue along the perimeter, turn left, go down five steps and into an open field, and proceed toward the wooden bridge. You may detour here into the passageway (on right) marked 13 Halsgraben. The "old" wooden bridge is actually modern. Angle left through two arches (before the bridge) and through the rough entry to the Verliess (prison) on the left.

9 Prison: This is one of six dungeons. You came through an entrance prisoners only dreamed of 400 years ago. They came and went through the little square hole in the ceiling. The holes in the walls supported timbers that thoughtfully gave as many as 15 residents something to sit on to keep them out of the filthy slop that gathered on the floor. Twice a day, they were given bread and water. Some prisoners actually survived longer than two years in here. While the town could torture and execute, the castle only had permission to imprison criminals in these dungeons. Consider this: According to town records, the two men who spent the most time down here—2.5 years each—died within three weeks of regaining their freedom. Perhaps after a diet of bread and water, feasting

on meat and wine was simply too much.

- *Continue through the next arch, under the white arrow, then turn left and go 30 yards to the Schlachthaus.*

10 Slaughterhouse: Any proper castle was prepared to survive a six-month siege. With 4,000 people, that's a lot of provisions. The cattle that lived within the walls were slaughtered in this room. The castle's mortar was congealed here (by packing all the organic waste from the kitchen into kegs and sealing it). Notice the drainage gutters. "Running water" came through from drains built into the walls (to keep the mortar dry and therefore strong...and less smelly).

- *Back outside, climb the modern stairs (nine 8" steps) to the left. A skinny, dark passage (yes, that's the one) leads you into the...*

11 Big Cellar: This *Grosser Keller* was a big pantry. When the castle was smaller, this was the original moat—you can see the rough lower parts of the wall. The original floor was 13 feet deeper. The drawbridge rested upon the stone nubs on the left. When the castle expanded, the moat became this cellar. Halfway up the walls on the entrance side of the room, square holes mark spots where timbers made a storage loft, perhaps filled with grain. In the back, an arch leads to the wine cellar (sometimes blocked off) where finer wine was kept. Part of a soldier's pay was wine...table wine. This wine was kept in a single 180,000-liter stone barrel (that's 47,550 gallons), which generally lasted about 18 months.

The count owned the surrounding farmland. Farmers got to keep 20 percent of their production. Later, in more liberal feudal times, the nobility let them keep 40 percent. Today, the German government leaves the workers with 60 percent...and provides a few more services.

- *You're free. Climb out (seventeen 8" steps), turn right, and leave. For coffee on a great view terrace, visit the Rheinfels Castle Hotel, opposite the entrance (WC at base of steps).*

Koblenz

The Rhine and Mosel rivers flow together at a confluence known as "German Corner" (Deutsche Ecke)—home to Koblenz, one of the oldest towns in Germany (which recently celebrated its 2,000th birthday). While not quite matching up to Bacharach and St. Goar for quaintness, Koblenz has its own advantages: It's far more accessible than those smaller Rhine towns, and it's a good place to catch a boat going south to see the best parts of the Rhine. Accommodations in Koblenz are listed on page *TK.

Accessibility in Koblenz

The townsfolk are trying to modernize their little city without losing its historic quaintness. Most museums, sights, and churches are accessible to wheelchair users. The free TI map (gives accessibility information for Koblenz's sights see "Tourist Information," below).

For any additional help you need that the TI can't provide, contact **Der Kreis Club Behinderter** (tel. 0261/14447, a short taxi ride from the station at Am Alten Hospital 3a, www.der-kreis-cbf.de).

Immobilien-Center is another excellent resource for people with limited mobility, providing medical help and information on accessibility (**AE, AI, AT, ♥**, Level 1—Fully Accessible; Mon–Fri 9:00–17:00, closed Sat–Sun, Friedrich-Ebert-Ring 53, 1 block from Ibis Hotel, tel. 0261/393-278).

Tourist Information

Koblenz's TI (**AE, AI, ♥**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) is friendly and helpful (Mon–Fri 9:00–19:00, Sat–Sun 10:00–19:00, until 18:00 Oct–April, closed Sun Nov–March, just south of the station at Bahnhofplatz 7, tel. 0261/303-880). The free TI map shows all the streets in Koblenz that are accessible for wheelchair users, lists Koblenz's 18 most historically significant sights (including accessibility notes), and tells the story of this historic confluence. There's no accessible toilet at the TI, but two are nearby, in or near the train station (see below).

Arrival in Koblenz

The **train station** is Level 2—Moderately Accessible, requiring some assistance to get on and off the trains. Wheelchair users should contact the all-Germany Mobility Service Office (tel. 0180-551-2512; see page *TK for more details) to arrange for a station assistant to set up a ramp for the train and lift. The station has an accessible toilet (near the main entrance, at the lower level—reached by the accessible lift; another accessible toilet is in the adjoining McDonald's). Permanent ramps lead to the street on both the north and south exits of the station. The south ramp takes you to the taxis and the TI.

The **boat dock** (with both Rhine and Mosel boats) is five blocks on Marktbildchenweg Strasse from the station. At the river, you can access a ramp a half-block upstream from the boat dock (to avoid eight 7" steps).

Sleeping and Eating on the Rhine

Sleeping

The Rhine is an easy place for cheap sleeps, but accessible rooms can be hard to come by. In terms of sheer quaintness, Bacharach and St. Goar are the best towns for an overnight stop (10 miles, apart, connected by milk-run trains, riverboats, and a riverside bike path). Slow walkers, and highly mobile wheelchair users traveling with a companion, will want to consider these listings first. Bacharach is a more interesting town, but St. Goar has the famous castle. Parking in Bacharach is simple along the highway next to the tracks (3-hour daytime limit is generally not enforced) or in the boat parking lot. Parking in St. Goar is tighter; ask at your hotel.

Those with limited mobility will find far better options in some of the valley's larger towns (or in big cities like Köln or Frankfurt; see accessible hotel listings later in this chapter). For wheelchair users traveling alone, I've listed some good, accessible options in the towns of Koblenz and Mainz—both of which also have access to the region's best activity, the Rhine boat cruise.

Eating

Germans eat lunch and dinner about when we do. Order house specials whenever possible. Pork, fish, and venison are good, and don't miss the bratwurst and sauerkraut. Potatoes are the standard vegetable, but *Spargel* (giant white asparagus) is a must in season. The bread and pretzels in the basket on your table often cost extra. If you need a break from pork, order the *Salatteller*. Great beers and white wines abound. Go with whatever beer is on tap.

I've included the most accessible restaurants for each place. But unless otherwise noted (by **AT** or **AT+A**), these restaurants do *not* have accessible toilets.

Tippling: Tipping is an issue only at restaurants that have waiters and waitresses. Don't tip if you order your food at a counter. At restaurants with wait staff, the service charge (10–15 percent) is usually listed on the menu and included in your bill. When the service is included, there's no need to tip beyond that, but if you like to tip and you're pleased with the service, you can round up the bill (but not more than five percent). If the service is not included, tip up to 10 percent. Rather than leaving coins on the table, Germans usually pay with paper, saying how much they'd like the bill to be (e.g., for an €8.10 meal, give a €20 bill and say "*Neun Euro*"—9 euros—to get €11 change).

Sleep Code

(€1 = about \$1.20)

S = Single, **D** = Double/Twin, **T** = Triple, **Q** = Quad, **b** = bathroom, **s** = shower only. All hotels speak some English. Breakfast is included, and credit cards are accepted unless otherwise noted.

Sleeping in Bacharach

(country code: 49, area code: 06743)

See map on page *TK for locations.

Level 2—Moderately Accessible

Hotel Gelber Hof (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB+A) has been operated by the Mades family since 1728—a whopping 278 years (Renate and Heiner have been in charge for the last 38). Inside you'll find a newly renovated entry and modern, well-cared-for rooms (accessible toilets in hallway—ramp to sink available upon request; Sb-€65, Db-€70, closed Nov–Easter, one block from church at 26 Blucherstrasse, tel. 06743/910-100, fax 06743/910-1050, www.hotel-gelber-hof.com, mades@hotel-gelber-hof.com).

Pension Winzerhaus (AE+A, AI, AR, AB+A) has 10 simple, clean, modern rooms in a less-charming location 200 yards up the valley from the town gate (Sb-€30, Db-€45, Tb-€60, Qb-€65, cash only, free bikes for guests, non-smoking rooms, some street noise, easy parking, Blücherstrasse 60, tel. 06743/1294, winzerhaus@compuserve.de).

Level 3—Minimally Accessible

Hotel Rhein (AE+A, AI, AR+A, AB+A), with 14 spacious and comfortable rooms, is classy, well-run, decorated with a modern flair, and overlooks the river. Since it's right on the train tracks, its river- and train-side rooms come with four-paned windows and air-conditioning (Db-€86, cheaper for 2 nights, half-board option, directly inland from the K-D boat dock at Landstrasse 50, tel. 06743/1243, fax 06743/1413, info@rhein-hotel-bacharach.de, www.rhein-hotel-bacharach.de). This place has been in the Stuber family for six generations.

Hotel Kranenturm (AE+A, AI+A, AR, AB+A), offering castle ambience without the climb, combines hotel comfort with *Zimmer* coziness right downtown. Run by hardworking Kurt Engel and his intense but friendly wife, Fatima, this hotel is actually part of the medieval fortification. Its former *Kran* (crane) towers are now round rooms. When

the riverbank was higher, cranes on this tower loaded barrels of wine onto Rhine boats. While just 15 feet from the train tracks, a combination of medieval sturdiness, triple-paned windows, and included earplugs makes the riverside rooms sleepable (Sb-€40–44, Db-€55–62, bigger Db-€58–65, Db in huge tower rooms with castle and river views-€70–80, Tb-€80–95, honeymoon special-€90–105, lower price is for off-season or stays of at least 3 nights in high season, family deals, cash preferred, Rhine views come with ripping train noise, back rooms are quieter, kid-friendly, laundry service-€12.50, Langstrasse 30, tel. 06743/1308, fax 06743/1021, www.kranenturm.com, hotel-kranenturm@t-online.de). Kurt, a good cook, serves €6–18 dinners.

Hotel Altkölnischer Hof (AE+A, AI+A, AR, AB+A), a grand old building near the church, rents 20 rooms with modern furnishings (and some balconies) over an Old World restaurant. Public rooms are old-time elegant (call to reserve larger room for wheelchair access, bathrooms not accessible, staff will place wooden ramp over 2 steps on side entry, small elevator fits wheelchair only if it's folded; Sb-€48–70, small or dark Db-€62–65, bright new Db-€72–82, new Db with balcony-€80–105, elevator, closed Nov–March, tel. 06743/1339 or 06743/2186, fax 06743/2793, www.hotel-bacharach-rhein.de, altkoelnischer-hof@t-online.de).

Eating in Bacharach

You can easily find atmospheric restaurants offering inexpensive (€10–15) indoor and outdoor dining.

Posthof Restaurant (AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible) is a historic carriage house—a stopping place for centuries of guests—newly opened as a restaurant. The menu is trendier, with free German tapas (ask), seasonal specials, and local “as organic as possible” produce. You’ll sit in a half-timbered cobbled courtyard (€5–15, good salads and veggie dishes, fun kids’ play area, daily 11:00 until late, Oberstrasse 45, tel. 06743/599-663).

Altes Haus (AE+A, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible), the oldest building in town (see page *TK), serves reliably good food in Bacharach’s most romantic atmosphere (€9–15, Thu–Tue 12:00–15:30 & 18:00–21:30, closed Wed and Dec–Easter, dead center by the church, tel. 06743/1209). Find the cozy little dining room with photos of the opera singer who sang about Bacharach, adding to its fame. You can enter the restaurant through the large door in front (three 7” steps), or if your wheelchair is less than 22” wide, use the back door (two 7” steps).

Kurpfälzische Münze (AE, AI, AT+A, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) is a popular standby for lunch or a drink on its sunny terrace

or in its pubby candlelit interior (€7–21, daily 11:00–22:00, in the old mint, a half-block down from Altes Haus, tel. 06743/1375).

Bistro Zur Alte Backstube (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) is an intimate spot with varied international fare, including exotic Greek and Indonesian dishes and standards such as pub grub and coffee and *kuchen* (€4–7, Tue–Sun 10:00 until late, closed Mon, Blucherstrasse 16, next to Hotel Gelber Hof).

Wine-Tasting: Drop in on entertaining Doris Bastian's **Weingut zum Grüner Baum** wine bar (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible). Groups of two to six people pay €13.50 for a wine carousel of 15 glasses—14 different white wines and one lonely rosé—and a basket of bread. Your mission: Team up with others who have this book to rendezvous here after dinner. Spin the lazy susan, share a common cup, and discuss the taste. Doris insists: “After each wine, you must talk to each other.” They offer soup, cold cuts, and good ambience indoors and out (Mon–Wed and Fri from 13:00, Sat–Sun from 12:00, closed Thu and Feb–mid-March, just past Altes Haus, tel. 06743/1208). To make a meal of a carousel, consider their *Kase Teller* (7 different cheeses, including *Spundekase*, the local soft cheese).

Sleeping in and near St. Goar (country code: 49, area code: 06741)

Level 1—Fully Accessible

Hotel Landsknecht (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB, ♥), with 35 modern rooms, is the only fully accessible hotel in town. It's a newly remodeled, charming place on the banks of the Rhine just downstream from St. Goar. The delightful owner, Martina—the first Rhine Wine Queen—is a wealth of information on wine and accessibility issues (Db-€60–90, closed Jan–Feb, free parking, Aussiedlung Landsknecht 6, tel. 06741/2011, fax 06741/7499, www.hotel-landsknecht.de, info@hotel-landsknecht.de). You have several options for reaching this hotel, which is about a mile north of St. Goar's town center. If you're coming by train, get off at Boppard's train station (which offers much better access than St. Goar's), then call for Taxi Erdmann's accessible service for a ride to the hotel (€7.50, tel. 06741/7738). If you're arriving by boat, get off at St. Goar and follow the accessible riverside path from town to the hotel. Once you get to the hotel, Martina will provide accessible shuttle service to St. Goar.

Level 2—Moderately Accessible

Rheinfels Castle Hotel (AE+A, AI, AL, AR) is the town splurge.

Actually part of the castle but an entirely new building, this luxurious 60-room place is good for those with money and a car (Db-€140-180 depending on river views and balconies, extra adult bed-€37, extra bed for kids aged 7-11—€25, kids under 7 free, elevator, free parking, indoor pool and sauna, dress-up restaurant, Schlossberg 47, tel. 06741/8020, fax 06741/802-802, www.castle-hotel-rheinfels.com, info@burg-rheinfels.de). Access to the exterior ramp is available upon request. The rooms are large enough for wheelchair users, but the bathrooms are not. But the staff have hosted wheelchair users in the past, and are willing to assist.

Level 4—Not Accessible

Hotel am Markt, well-run by Herr and Frau Velich, is rustic, with all the modern comforts. It features a hint of antler with a pastel flair, 18 bright rooms (enter through side door, then five 5” steps into hallway and twenty 7.5” steps to hotel rooms, bathroom not wheelchair-accessible), and a good restaurant where the son, Gil, is a fine chef (see “Eating,” below). It’s a good value and a stone’s throw from the boat dock and train station (S-€35, Sb-€43, standard Db-€59, bigger riverview Db-€69, Tb-€82, Qb-€88, March-mid-April and Oct-mid-Nov Db-€50, closed mid-Nov-Feb, Am Markt 1, tel. 06741/1689, fax 06741/1721, www.hotelammarkt1.de, hotel.am.markt@gmx.de). Rental bikes are available to guests (€5/day). They now also rent 10 rooms of equal quality for the same price (also not accessible) in a smaller riverside hotel a block away.

Eating in St. Goar

Das Boot (AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible) is a beached tour boat serving German fare on the banks of the Rhine, halfway between the town square and the Hotel Landsknect (€5-13, April-Nov daily 12:00-22:00, closed Dec-March, tel. 6741/934-488).

Zum Goldenen Lowen (AE, AI, ♥, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) dishes up traditional German food in a cozy, romantic setting overlooking the Rhine (€3-12, open daily, Heerstrasse 82, tel. 06741/1674).

Hotel am Markt (AE+A, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) serves tasty traditional meals with plenty of game and fish (try Chef Gil’s specialties—roast wild boar and homemade cheesecake) at fair prices with good atmosphere and service (€5-16 daily specials, March-mid-Nov daily 11:00-21:00, closed mid-Nov-Feb). To enter, use the three 5” steps on the side, travel across the patio, and go up two 7” front entry steps; the staff can assist you during non-peak times.

For your Rhine splurge, ascend to **Rheinfels Castle Hotel** (AE+A,

AI, AL, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) for its incredible view terrace in an elegant setting (€15–20 dinners, daily 18:30–21:15, reserve a table by the window, tel. 06741/8020, see hotel listing above). To enter, go through the parking lot and locked gate—which must be opened by staff—then down the ramp, through hallways, and to the elevator.

Sleeping in Koblenz

(country code: 49, area code: 0261)

Each of these four hotels is fully accessible with adapted rooms, and all are located conveniently close to the station (or within a short taxi trip).

Level 1—Fully Accessible

Ibis Hotel (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB) is an inexpensive, modern chain hotel a short roll or stroll from the train station (4 adapted rooms). This Ibis is particularly warm and inviting, full of activity and social interaction. It's surrounded by shops, markets, restaurants, and beer halls (Db-€49–64, Rizzastrasse 42, tel. 0261/30240, fax 0261/302-4240, www.ibishotel.com).

Cityhotel Kurfürst Balduin (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB) is a centrally located, business-class hotel (Sb-€58, Db-€96, Hohenfelder Strasse 12, tel. 0261/13320, fax 0261/332-100, www.cityhotel-koblenz.de, info@cityhotel-koblenz.de).

Hotel Im Stüffje (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB) is a quaint old-style hotel that has been retrofitted for accessibility (Sb-€60, Db-€80, Tb-€105, Hohenzollernstrasse 5–7, tel. 0261/915-220, fax 0261/915-2244, www.handicap-hotel.de, hotel-im-stueffje@t-online.de).

Hotel Mercure (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB) is a modern 168-room chain hotel near the station (Db-€120, Julius-Wegeler-Strasse 6, tel. 0261/1360, fax 0261/136-1199, www.mercure.de, h2004@accor-hotels.com).

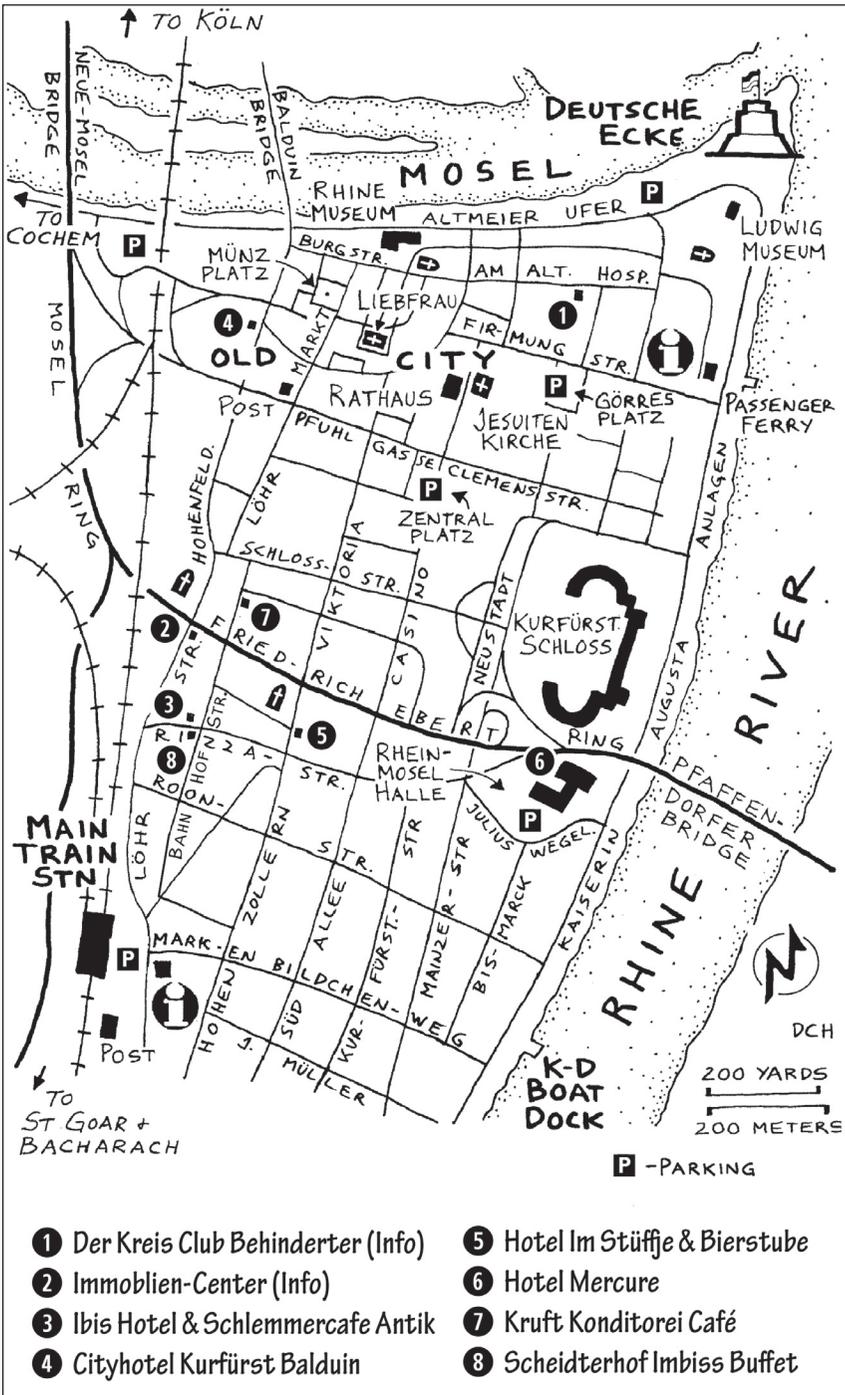
Eating in Koblenz

Schlemmercafe Antik (AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible), adjoining the Ibis Hotel, is a friendly, stylish café serving coffee, champagne, and all the goodies that go with them (€3–10, daily 10:00–20:00, Rizzastrasse 44, tel. 0261/921-5441)

Hotel Im Stüffje Bierstube (AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible) is a beer-and-brats *Bierstube* one block from the Ibis Hotel (€4–8, daily 11:00–22:00, Hohenzollernstrasse 5–7, tel. 0261/915-222).

Kruft Konditorei Café (AE+A, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) is a wonderland of German delicacies, where marzipan

Koblenz



fruits, Black Forest cakes, linzer tarts, and delicate cookies abound (Bahnhofstrasse 3).

On Rizzastrasse is a fully accessible salad bar and hot-food buffet called **Scheidterhof Imbiss** and three **picnic-perfect stores**: a bakery, a meat market, and a vegetable market.

Sleeping in Mainz

(country code: 49, area code: 06131)

Consider spending the night in the town of Mainz—if for no other reason than to take advantage of the wonderful INNdependence Hotel. The town is also close to Frankfurt and its airport.

Arrival in Mainz: The Mainz **train station** is fully accessible (AE, AI, AL, AT). There's an accessible toilet on the bottom floor of the station near the entrance (take the lift down). To reach the TI, leave the station, go across the courtyard and bus stops, and into the left end of the building (Im Brückenturm am Rathaus, tel. 06131/286-210). To get from the **boat dock** to the TI, you can catch the accessible tram, take a taxi, or roll or stroll up Kaiser Strasse from the riverfront Adenauer-Ufer (a 45-min trek).

To get from the train station to the INNdependence Hotel, catch the accessible tram (#50 or #51, €2.20) on the sidewalk just outside of the station's front door. Take the tram five stops (to the "Pariser Tor" stop), get off facing the busy street, cross over to the side with the soccer field, and roll or stroll a block to the hotel.

Accessibility in Mainz: Mainz is at Europe's forefront with accessibility issues. All buses, trams, and stations, along with all museums and tourist sights, are fully accessible, with adapted toilets. You'll find lots of fully accessible shops, restaurants, bars, cinemas, and Internet spots at the outdoor Fort Malakoff mall, on the Rhine. And you can spend the night at the classy INNdependence Hotel (see below), run by and for people with disabilities. If you are traveling with a wheelchair, consider using Mainz as a base for exploring the Rhine River Valley.

Level 1—Fully Accessible

INNdependence Hotel is fully accessible (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB, ♥), run by the Mainz disabled community. These hospitable folks are justifiably proud of their establishment (Sb-€74, Db-€85, Gleiwitzer Strasse 4, tel. 06131/250-5380,



fax 06131/211-451, www.independence.de, info@independence.de). For directions to the hotel from the station, see “Arrival in Mainz,” above.

Ibis Mainz (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB) belongs to the inexpensive, no-frills Ibis hotel chain (some adapted rooms; Db-€89, less off-season, Holzhofstrasse 2, tel. 06131/934-240, fax 06131/234-126, www.ibishotel.com).

TRANSPORTATION CONNECTIONS

For information on train station accessibility, see the “Rhine Transport Accessibility” sidebar on page *TK. Milk-run trains stop at all Rhine towns each hour, starting as early as 6:00. Koblenz, Boppard, St. Goar, Bacharach, Bingen, and Mainz are each about 15 minutes apart. From Koblenz to Mainz takes 75 minutes. The St. Goar–Bacharach segment departs at about :20 after the hour in each direction (€2.60, buy tickets from the machine in the unmanned station). To get a faster big train, go to Mainz (for points east and south) or Koblenz (for points north, west, and along Mosel). Train info: tel. 11861 (€0.46/min). Trains connecting Bacharach and St. Goar leave hourly (at about :20 after the hour in each direction, 10 min ride, €2.60 trip, buy tickets from the machine in the unmanned station).

From Mainz by Train to: Bacharach/St. Goar (hrly, 1 hr), **Cochem** (hrly, 2.5 hrs, change in Koblenz), **Köln** (3/hr, 90 min, change in Koblenz), **Frankfurt** (3/hr, 45 min), **Frankfurt Airport** (4/hr, 25 min), **Baden-Baden** (hrly, 1.5 hrs), **Munich** (hrly, 4 hrs).

From Koblenz by Train to: Köln (4/hr, 1 hr), **Frankfurt** (3/hr, 1.5 hrs, 1 change), **Berlin** (2/hr, 5.5 hrs, up to 2 changes), **Cochem** (2/hr, 50 min), **Trier** (2/hr, 2 hrs), **Brussels** (12/day, 4 hrs, change in Köln), **Amsterdam** (12/day, 4.5 hrs, up to 5 changes).

From Frankfurt by Train to: Bacharach (hrly, 1.5 hrs, change in Mainz; first train to Bacharach departs at 6:00, last train at 20:45), **Koblenz** (hrly, 1.5 hrs direct), **Rothenburg** (hrly, 3 hrs, transfers in Würzburg and Steinach), **Würzburg** (hrly, 2 hrs), **Nürnberg** (hrly, 2 hrs), **Munich** (hrly, 4 hrs, 1 change), **Amsterdam** (8/day, 5 hrs, up to 3 changes), **Paris** (9/day, 6.5 hrs, up to 3 changes).

From Bacharach by Train to: Frankfurt Airport (hrly, 1.5 hrs, change in Mainz, first train to Frankfurt airport departs about 5:40, last train 21:30).

Köln

Germany's fourth-largest city, Köln ("Cologne" in English), has a compact, lively center. The Rhine was the northern boundary of the Roman Empire and, 1,700 years ago, Constantine—the first Christian emperor—made Colonia the seat of a bishopric. Five hundred years later, under Charlemagne, Köln became the seat of an archbishopric. With 40,000 people within its walls, it was the largest German city and an important cultural and religious center throughout the Middle Ages. Today, the city is most famous for its toilet water. Eau de Cologne was first made here by an Italian chemist in 1709.

Even though WWII bombs destroyed 95 percent of Köln (population down from 800,000 to 40,000), it has become, after a remarkable recovery, a bustling commercial and cultural center, as well as a fun, colorful, and pleasant-smelling city.

ORIENTATION

(area code: 0221)

Köln's old-town core, bombed out then rebuilt quaint, is traffic-free and includes a park and bike path along the river. From the cathedral/TI/train station, Hohe Strasse leads into the shopping action.

For a quick old-town ramble, roll or stroll down Hohe Strasse and take a left at the city hall (*Rathaus*) to the river (where K-D Rhine cruises start). Enjoy the quaint old town and the waterfront park. The Hohenzollernbrücke, crossing the Rhine at the cathedral, is the busiest railway bridge in the world (30 trains per hour all day long).

Accessibility in Köln

As a big, modern, sophisticated city—but with the feel of a small town—Köln offers much better accessibility than other Rhine destinations in this chapter. The wheelchair user can move freely between the boat dock, train station, hotels, restaurants, and museums. Accessible Köln is a monument to efficient, progressive German thinking.

Tourist Information

Köln's energetic TI (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible), opposite the church entrance, has a basic €0.20 city map and several brochures (July–Aug Mon–Sat 9:00–22:00, Sun 10:00–18:00; Sept–June Mon–Sat 9:00–21:00, Sun 10:00–18:00; Unter Fettenhennen 19, tel.

0221/2213-0400, www.koelntourismus.de). They also offer a range of private guided tours suitable for wheelchair users, covering such topics as architecture, medieval Köln, and Romanesque churches (call TI to reserve). For information on Köln's museums, visit www.museenkoeln.de. Note that most museums are closed on Monday.

WelcomeCard: The card includes use of the city's transit system (which includes local trains to Bonn, but not the slick InterCity and Express trains), a 50 percent discount on major museums (Roman-Germanic Museum, Ludwig, Käthe Kollwitz, and Wallraf-Richartz), and smaller discounts on other museums like the Chocolate Museum (€9/24 hrs, €14/48 hrs, €19/72 hrs; discounts for families or groups of 3 or more).

City Bus Tours: Two-hour German/English city bus tours leave daily from the TI. These tours are moderately accessible for wheelchair users, who may require assistance boarding the bus and transferring from the wheelchair to a bus seat (€14, discount with WelcomeCard, cash only, buy tickets from driver, April–Oct daily at 10:00, 12:30, and 15:00, plus a shorter version at 17:30 on Sat; Nov–March daily at 11:00 and 14:00; smart to reserve summer Saturday tours, tel. 0221/979-2570 or 0221/979-2571).

Arrival in Köln

Köln couldn't be easier to visit—its three important sights are clustered within two blocks of the TI and train station. This super pedestrian zone is a constant carnival of people.

Köln's bustling **train station** (**AE, AI, AL, AT**, Level 1—Fully Accessible) has everything you need: a drugstore, food court, juice bar, shopping mall with grocery store, pricey WC (€1), travel center (*Reisezentrum*, Mon–Fri 5:30–23:00, Sat–Sun 6:00–22:00), and lockers (€3/24 hrs, accepts coins and €5 and €10 bills, put money in and wait 30 seconds for door to open; next to *Reisezentrum*).

To get to the cathedral from the train station, exit the station's front door and turn left. The cathedral, reaching high into the sky, is directly in front of you, about 100 yards away. The lift up to the cathedral is to the right of the cathedral's steps, in a tower with a big blue "U." Exit right from the lift, and follow the building around to the front.

If you **drive** to Köln, follow signs to *Zentrum*, then continue to the huge, accessible Parkhaus am Dom pay lot under the cathedral (€1.50/hr, €13/day).

Helpful Hints

Internet Access: Via Phone (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) offers Internet access and an inexpensive phone service right near the station (€2.50/hr, daily 9:00–1:00 in the morning, tel. 0221/1399-6200). Heading out of the train station, turn left on Marzellenstrasse; Via Phone is on your right at #3-5.

Ticket Office: To get tickets to concerts, the opera, and the theater, stop by KölnMusik Ticket (AE, AI, Level 1—Fully Accessible) next to the Roman-Germanic Museum (Mon–Fri 10:00–19:00, Sat 10:00–16:00, closed Sun, tel. 0221/2040-8160, can book ahead at www.koelnticket.de).

Festival: Köln's Lichter Festival lights up the sky on one Saturday each July, with fireworks, music, and lots of boats on the river (get details from TI or at www.koelner-lichter.de).

SIGHTS

Köln's Cathedral (Dom)

The neo-Gothic Dom—Germany's most exciting church, and easily worth ▲▲▲—looms immediately up from the train station.

Cathedral Access: AE, AI, AL, Level 1—Fully Accessible. As you face the cathedral, the accessible entrance is on the right. There is also an accessible glass lift that takes you halfway up the side of this colossal structure (entrance on side of Dom facing train station). The toilets are difficult to reach, but there is a free, accessible toilet next door in the Ludwig Museum.

Cost and Hours: Free, open daily 6:00–19:30; no tourist visits during church services daily 6:30–10:00 and at 18:30, Sun also at 12:00, 17:00, and 18:30; get schedule at Dom Forum office or www.koelner-dom.de.

Tours: The one-hour English-only tours are reliably excellent; wheelchair users are welcome (€4, Mon–Sat at 10:30 and 14:30, Sun at 14:30, meet inside front door of Dom, tel. 0221/9258-4730). Your tour ticket also gives you free entry to the English-language 20-minute video in the Dom Forum directly following the tour (see “Dom Forum,” page *TK).



➔ **Self-Guided Tour:** If you don't take the guided tour, follow this seven-stop route (note that stops 3–7 are closed during confession Mon–Fri 7:45–9:00, Sat 14:00–18:00).

➊ **Roman Gate and Cathedral Exterior:** The square in front of the cathedral has been a busy civic meeting place since ancient times. A Roman temple stood where the cathedral stands today. The north gate of the Roman city, from A.D. 50, marks the start of Köln's 2,000-year-old main street.

Look for the life-size replica tip of a spire. The real thing is 515 feet above you. The cathedral facade, finished according to the original 13th-century plan, is “neo-Gothic” from the 19th century.

Postcards show the church after the 1945 bombing. The red-brick building—off to your right as you face the church—is the Diocesan Museum. The Roman-Germanic Museum is between that and the cathedral, and the modern-art Ludwig Museum is behind that (all described below).

Go inside the church, to the pews in the center of the nave.

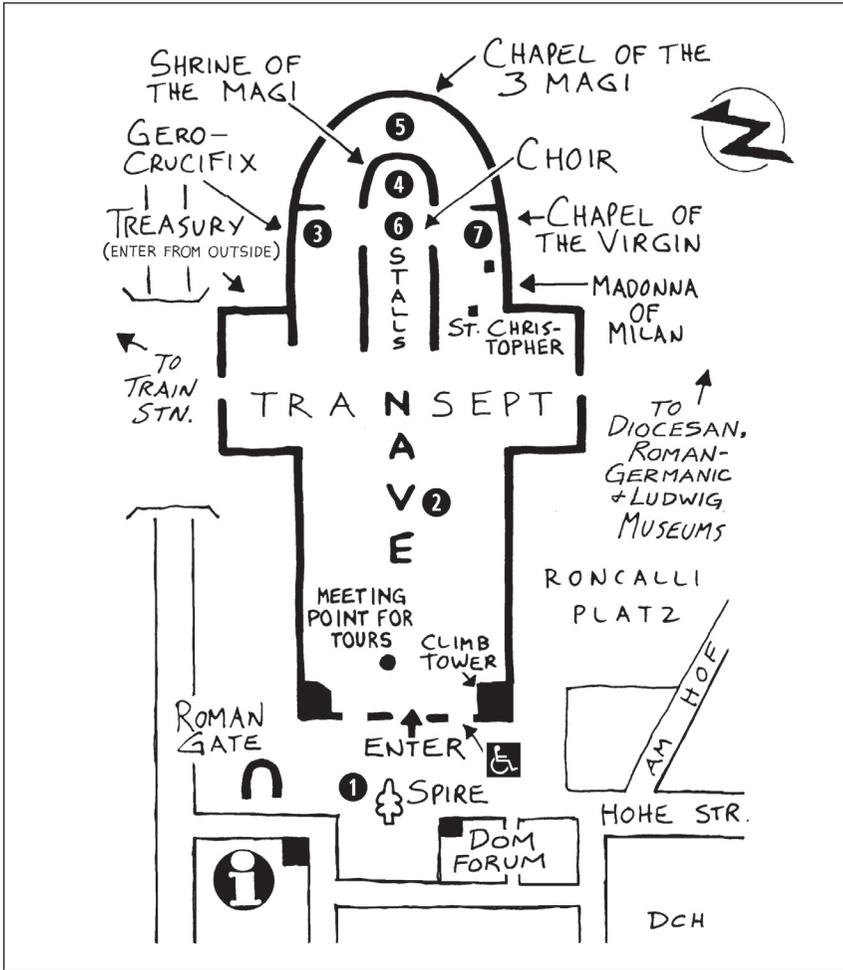
➋ **Nave:** If you feel small, you're supposed to. The 140-foot-tall ceiling reminds us of our place in the vast scheme of things. Lots of stained glass—enough to cover three football fields—fills the church with light, representing God.

The church was begun in 1248. The choir—the lofty area from the center altar to the far end ahead of you—was finished in 1322. Later, with the discovery of America and routes to the Indies by sea, trade shifted away from inland ports like Köln. Funds dried up, and eventually the building stopped. For 300 years, the finished end of the church was walled off and functioned as a church, while the unfinished torso (where you now sit) waited. For centuries, the symbol of Köln's skyline was a huge crane that sat atop the unfinished west spire.

With the rise of German patriotism in the early 1800s, Köln became a symbol of German unity. And the Prussians—the movers and shakers behind German unity—mistakenly considered Gothic a German style. They initiated a national tax that funded the speedy completion of this gloriously Gothic German church. Seven hundred workers (compared to 100 in the 14th century) finished the church in just 38 years (1842–1880). The great train station was built in the shadow of the cathedral's towering spire.



Köln Cathedral



The glass windows in the front of the church are medieval. The glass surrounding you in the nave is not as old, but it's precious nevertheless. The glass on the left is Renaissance. That on the right—a gift from Ludwig I, father of “Mad” King Ludwig of tourist fame—is 19th-century Bavarian.

While 95 percent of Köln was destroyed by WWII bombs, the structure of the cathedral survived fairly well. In anticipation of the bombing, the glass and art treasures were taken to shelters and saved. The new “swallow’s nest” organ above you was installed to celebrate the cathedral’s 750th birthday in 1998. Relics (mostly skulls) fill cupboards on each side of the nave. The guys in the red robes are cathedral cops,

called *Schweizers* (after the Swiss guard at the Vatican); if a service is getting ready to start, they might hustle you out (unless you'd like to stay for the service).

3 Gero-Crucifix: As you go through the gate into the oldest part of the church, look for the mosaic of the ninth-century church on the floor. It shows a saint holding the Carolingian Cathedral, which stood on this spot for several centuries before this one was built.

Ahead of you on the left, the Chapel of the Cross features the oldest surviving monumental crucifix from north of the Alps. Carved in 976 with a sensitivity 300 years ahead of its time, it shows Jesus not suffering and not triumphant—but with eyes closed...dead. He paid the price for our sins. It's quite a two-fer: great art and powerful theology in one. The cathedral has three big pilgrim stops: this crucifix, the Shrine of the Magi, and the *Madonna of Milan* (both coming up).

Continue to the front end of the church, stopping to look at the big golden reliquary in the glass case behind the high altar.

4 Shrine of the Magi: Relics were a big deal in the Middle Ages. Köln's acquisition of the bones of the Three Kings in the 12th century put it on the pilgrimage map and brought in enough money to justify the construction of this magnificent place. By some stretch of medieval Christian logic, these relics also justified the secular power of the local king. This reliquary, made in about 1200, is the biggest and most splendid I've seen. It's seven feet of gilded silver, jewels, and enamel. Old Testament prophets line the bottom, and 12 New Testament apostles—with a wingless angel in the center—line the top.

Inside sit the bones of the Magi...three skulls with golden crowns. So what's the big deal about these three kings of Christmas carol fame? They were the first to recognize Jesus as the savior and the first to come as pilgrims to worship him. They inspired medieval pilgrims and countless pilgrims since. For a thousand years, a theme of this cathedral has been that life is a pilgrimage...a search for God.

5 Chapel of the Three Magi: The center chapel, at the far end, is the oldest. It also features the church's oldest window (center, from 1265). The design is typical: a strip of Old Testament scenes on the left with a theologically and visually parallel strip of New Testament scenes on the right (such as, on bottom panels: to the left, the birth of Eve; to the right, the birth of Mary with her mother Anne on the bed).

Later, glass (which you saw lining the nave) was painted and glazed. This medieval window is actually colored glass, which is assembled like a mosaic. It was very expensive. The size was limited to what pilgrim donations could support. Notice the plain, budget design higher up.

6 Choir: Peek into the center zone between the high altar and the carved wooden central stalls. (You can usually only get inside if you take the tour.) This is surrounded by 13th- and 14th-century art: carved oak stalls, frescoed walls, statues painted as they would have been, and original stained glass high above. Study the fanciful oak carvings. The woman cutting the man's hair is a Samson-and-Delilah warning to the sexist men of the early Church.

7 Chapel of the Virgin: The nearby chapel faces one of the most precious paintings of the important Gothic School of Köln.

The Patron Saints of Köln was painted in 1442 by Stefan Lochner. Notice the photographic realism and believable depth. There are literally dozens of identifiable herbs in the grassy foreground. During the 19th century, the city fought to have it in the museum. The Church went to court to keep it. The judge ruled that it could stay in the cathedral only as long as a Mass was said before it every day. For more than a hundred years, that happened at 18:30. Now, 21st-century comfort has trumped 19th-century



law; in winter, services take place in the warmer Sacraments Chapel instead. (For more on the School of Köln art style, see “Wallraf-Richartz Museum,” page *TK.)

Overlooking the same chapel, the *Madonna of Milan* sculpture (1290), associated with miracles, was a focus of pilgrims for centuries.

As you head for the exit, find the statue of St. Christopher (with Jesus on his shoulder and the pilgrim's staff). Since 1470, pilgrims and travelers have looked up at him and taken solace in the hope that their patron saint is looking out for them. Go in peace.

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More Cathedral Sights

Treasury—The treasury sits outside the cathedral's left transept (when you exit through the front door, turn right and continue right around the building to the gold pillar that reads *Schatzkammer*). The six dim, hushed rooms are housed in the cathedral's 13th-century stone cellar vaults. Spotlights shine on black cases filled with gilded chalices and crosses, medieval reliquaries (bits of chain, bone, cross, and cloth in gold-crusted glass capsules), and plenty of fancy bishop garb: intricately embroidered miters and vestments, rings with fat gemstones, and six-foot gold croziers. Displays come with brief English descriptions, but the fine little €4

book sold inside the cathedral shop provides extra information.

Access: AE, AI, AL, Level 1—Fully Accessible.

Cost and Hours: €4, €5 combo-ticket also includes spire, daily 10:00–18:00, last entry 30 min before closing, lockers at entry with €1 coin deposit, tel. 0221/1794-0300.

Dom Forum—This helpful visitors center, across from the entrance of the cathedral, is a good place to take a break. They offer an English-language “multi-vision” video on the history of the church daily at 11:30 and 15:30 (starts slow, but gets a little better, 20 min, €1.50 or included with church tour).

Access: AE, AI, Level 1—Fully Accessible.

Cost and Hours: Free, Mon–Fri 10:00–18:30, Sat 10:00–17:00, Sun 13:00–17:00, plenty of info, welcoming lounge with €0.70 coffee and juice, clean WC downstairs—free but not accessible, tel. 0221/9258-4720, www.domforum.de.

Diocesan Museum—This museum contains some of the cathedral’s finest art.

Access: AE+A, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, one 4” entry step with no railing.

Cost and Hours: Free, Fri–Wed 10:00–18:00, closed Thu, brick building to right of Roman Museum, Roncalliplatz 2, tel. 0221/257-7672, www.kolumba.de.

Near the Cathedral

▲▲Roman-Germanic Museum (Römisch-Germanisches Museum)—Germany’s best Roman museum offers minimal English among its elegant and fascinating display of Roman artifacts: fine glassware, jewelry, and mosaics. The permanent collection is downstairs and upstairs; temporary exhibits are on the ground floor.

Budget travelers can view the museum’s prize piece, a fine mosaic floor, free from the front window. Once the dining-room floor of a rich merchant, this is actually its original position (the museum was built around it). It shows scenes from the life of Dionysus...wine and good times, Roman-style. The tall monument over the Dionysus mosaic is the mausoleum of a first-century Roman army officer. Upstairs, you’ll see a reassembled, arched original gate to the Roman city with the Roman initials for the town, CCAA, still legible, and incredible glassware that Roman Köln was famous for producing. The gift shop’s €0.50 brochure provides too little information, and the €12 book too much (detailed descriptions for this museum and about Roman artifacts displayed in other German cities).

Access: AE, AI, AL, Level 1—Fully Accessible. A free, accessible toilet is at the nearby Ludwig Museum (see below).

Cost, Hours, Location: €4.50, 50 percent discount with WelcomeCard, Tue–Sun 10:00–17:00, closed Mon, Roncalliplatz 4, tel. 0221/2212-4590, www.museenkoeln.de/rgm.

▲▲**Ludwig Museum**—Next door and more enjoyable, this museum—in a slick and modern building—offers a stimulating trip through the art of the last century and American Pop and post-WWII art. Artists include German and Russian expressionists, the Blue Rider school, and Picasso. The floor plan is a mess. Just enjoy the art. The *Agfa History of Photography* exhibit is three rooms with no English; look for the pigeon with the tiny vintage camera strapped to its chest.

Access: AE, AI, AL, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible.

Cost, Hours, Location: €7.50, often more due to special exhibitions, 50 percent discount with WelcomeCard, Tue–Sun 10:00–18:00, closed Mon, last entry 30 min before closing, must check large bags, exhibits are fairly well described in English; classy but pricey cafeteria—€5–9 salads, pastas, sandwiches, and soups; Bischofsgartenstrasse 1, tel. 0221/2212-6165, www.museum-ludwig.de.

Hohe Strasse—The Roman arch in front of the cathedral reminds us that even in Roman times, this was an important trading street and a main road through Köln. In the Middle Ages, when Köln was a major player in the heavyweight Hanseatic Trading League, two major trading routes crossed here. This high street thrived. Following its complete destruction in World War II, it emerged once again as an active trading street—the first pedestrian shopping mall in Germany. Today, it remains a wonderful place to explore and shop.

Farther from the Cathedral

These museums are several blocks south of the cathedral area.

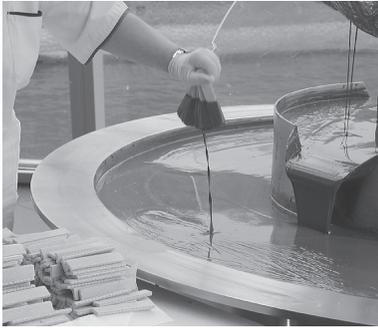
▲▲**Wallraf-Richartz Museum**—Housed in a cinderblock of a building near the city hall, this minimalist museum features a world-class collection of old masters, from medieval to northern Baroque and Impressionist. You'll see the best collection anywhere of Gothic School of Köln paintings (1300–1550), offering an intimate peek into those times. Included is German, Dutch, Flemish, and French art by masters such as Dürer, Rubens, Rembrandt, Hals, Steen, van Gogh, Renoir, Monet, Munch, and Cézanne.

Access: AE, AI, AL, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible.

Cost, Hours, Location: €5.80, often more due to special exhibitions, 50 percent discount with WelcomeCard, Tue 10:00–20:00, Wed–Fri

10:00–18:00, Sat–Sun 11:00–18:00, closed Mon, English descriptions and good €2.50 audioguide for permanent exhibit, Martin Strasse 39, tel. 0221/2212-1119, www.museenkoeln.de/wrm.

Imhoff-Stollwerck Chocolate Museum—Chocoholics love this place, cleverly billed as the “MMMuseum.” You’ll take a well-described-in-



English tour following the origin of the cocoa bean to the finished product. You can see displays on the culture of chocolate and watch treats trundle down the conveyor belt in the functioning chocolate factory, the museum’s highlight. The top-floor exhibit of chocolate advertising is fun. Sample sweets from the chocolate fountain, or take some home from the

fragrant, choc-full gift shop.

Access: AE, AI, AL, AT, ♥, Level 1—Fully Accessible.

Cost, Hours, Location: €6, discount with WelcomeCard, Tue–Fri 10:00–18:00, Sat–Sun 11:00–19:00, closed Mon, last entry 1 hr before closing, Rheinauhafen 1a, tel. 0221/931-8880, www.schokoladenmuseum.de.

Getting There: The museum is south on the riverfront between Deutzer and Severins bridges. Or take the handy Schoko-Express tourist train from Roncalliplatz (€2 each way, 2/hr, pickup point changes depending on events on the church square—either by TI or by the Ticket Office, confirm location at TI).

Käthe Kollwitz Museum—This contains the largest collection of the artist’s powerful expressionist art, welling from her experiences living in Berlin during the tumultuous first half of the last century.

Access: AE, AI, AL, Level 1—Fully Accessible. The entry and store interior are accessible for a person using a wheelchair. The glass elevator is accessible, as is the lift in the museum. You will need to ask the ticket agent for access to the elevator in order to visit the fourth-floor exhibits.

Cost, Hours, Location: €3, 50 percent discount with WelcomeCard, Tue–Fri 10:00–18:00, Sat–Sun 11:00–18:00, closed Mon, Neumarkt 18-24, tel. 0221/227-2899, www.kollwitz.de.

Getting There: From Hohe Strasse, go west on Schildergasse for about 10 minutes; go past Neumarkt Gallerie to Neumarkt Passage, enter Neumarkt Passage, and go to the glass-domed center courtyard.

SLEEPING

Köln is *the* convention town in Germany. Consequently, the town is either jam-packed, with hotels in the €180 range, or empty and hungry. Unless otherwise noted, prices listed are the non-convention weekday rates. You'll find that prices are much higher during conventions, but soft on weekends (always ask) and for slow-time drop-ins. To find out which conventions are in town when you are, visit www.koelnmesse.de. Unlisted smaller conventions can lead to small price increases. Big conventions in nearby Düsseldorf can also fill up rooms and raise rates in Köln. Outside of convention times, the TI can always get you a discounted room in a business-class hotel (for a €3 fee).

Level 1—Fully Accessible

Residenz am Dom (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB), a block and a half from the train station, is a fully accessible dream. It has 44 adapted, spacious, light, and cheery suites with full kitchens and all the amenities. Features include roll-in showers, emergency alarms, four restaurants on the premises, tranquil gardens, physical therapy, sauna, massage, and bank services (rates vary wildly depending on demand, from a low of Db-€80 to a high of Db-€240, An den Dominikanern 6–8, tel. 0221/166-4910, www.residenz-am-dom.de, zeitwohnen@residenz-am-dom.de). The reception desk can help you get theater tickets, find someone to do your laundry, or offer other tips for your stay in Köln.

Classic Hotel Harmonie (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB) is all class, striking a perfect balance between modern and classic. Its 72 rooms include some luxurious “superior” rooms (with hardwoods and swanky bathrooms, including a foot-warming floor) that become affordable on weekends. So *this* is how the other half lives (Sb-€75–95, Db-€115, €20 less on non-convention weekends if you ask, some rooms have train noise so request quiet room, non-smoking rooms, air-con, elevator, Ursulaplatz 13-19, tel. 0221/16570, fax 0221/165-7200, www.classic-hotel-harmonie.de, harmonie@classic-hotels.com).

Sleep Code

(€1 = about \$1.20, country code: 49, area code: 0221)

S = Single, **D** = Double/Twin, **T** = Triple, **Q** = Quad, **b** = bathroom, **s** = shower only. Unless otherwise noted, credit cards are accepted, English is spoken, and breakfast is included.

Maternushaus (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB), on a quiet tree-lined street in the center of Köln, is where the pope stays when he's in town. This Catholic guesthouse is a hub of activity; the attentive hotel staff focuses on nurturing community. Two adapted, high-tech rooms include emergency alarm cords, remote light switches, and roll-in showers (Sb-€84, Db-€114, Kardinal-Frings-Strasse 1-3, tel. 0221/163-1208, www.maternushaus.de).

Sofitel Köln am Dom (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB) is a modern, upscale chain hotel offering full accessibility, professionalism, and all the amenities (Db-€170–320 depending on season, just below the Dom on Kurt Hackenberg-Platz, tel. 0221/20630, fax 0221/206-3527, h1306@accor-hotels.com).

Level 2—Moderately Accessible

Hotel Ibis Köln am Dom (AE, AI, AL, AR), a huge budget chain with a 71-room modern hotel right at the train station, offers all the comforts in a tidy, affordable package (no accessible toilets in rooms; Sb-€77, Db-€89; convention rate: Sb-€109, Db-€121; breakfast-€9, non-smoking rooms, air-con, elevator, Hauptbahnhof, entry across from station's *Reisezentrum*, tel. 0221/912-8580, fax 0221/9128-58199, www.ibishotel.com, h0739@accor.com). The hotel's fine restaurant is accessible (with a nearby accessible toilet).

Hotel Engelbertz (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB+A) is a fine, family-run, 40-room place an eight-minute roll or stroll from the station and cathedral at the end of the pedestrian mall (Sb-€52 and Db-€68 if you call to book on same day or day before, Sb-€64 and Db-€85 if you reserve in advance; regular rate Sb-€70 and Db-€100, convention rate Db-€190, elevator, just off Hohe Strasse at Obenmarspforten 1-3, tel. 0221/257-8994, fax 0221/257-8924, www.hotel-engelbertz.de, info@hotel-engelbertz.de). Although the entry, lobby, and rooms are wheelchair-accessible, the bathrooms are not adapted for wheelchair users.

Hotel Cristall (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB+A) is a modern “designer hotel” with 84 cleverly appointed rooms (enjoy the big easel paintings and play human chess on the carpet). The deeply-hued breakfast room and lounge are so hip that German rock stars have photo shoots here (Sb-€72, Db-€95 but drops to €89 on weekends, rack rates can be higher, request quiet room to escape street and train noise, non-smoking rooms, air-con, elevator, Ursulaplatz 9-11, tel. 0221/16300, fax 0221/163-0333, www.hotelcristall.de, info@hotelcristall.de).

EATING

Kölsch is both the dialect spoken here and the city's distinct type of beer (pale, hoppy, and highly fermented). You'll find plenty of places to enjoy both in the streets around Alter Markt (2 blocks off the river, near city hall), as well as along Lintgasse and the waterfront area called the Frankenwerft.

Hotel Ibis am Dom Restaurant (AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible) has an upscale, trendy dining room with a varied menu and a welcoming staff (see hotel listing above; €5–18 entrées, daily 11:00 until late).

Café Canapé im MAK (AE, AI, AL, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible), with sophisticated locals enjoying light fare, is a good option for a non-*Bräuhäus* lunch (€3–7 meals, Tue–Sun 11:00–17:00, closed Mon, just across Hohe Strasse from the cathedral in Museum of Applied Arts—or Museum für Angewandte Kunst—at An der Rechtschule 1, inside front door and down the stairs, smoky inside, courtyard seating outside, tel. 0221/2212-6721).

Touristy **Früh am Dom** (AE, AI, AT, Level 1—Fully Accessible), closer to the cathedral and train station, offers three floors of drinking and dining options; the main floor is best for wheelchair users (€7–16 meals, daily 8:00–24:00, Am Hof 12–14, tel. 0221/261-3211).

Café Stovchen (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) is an intimate and friendly neighborhood *Bierstube*/café with a living room feeling and a spaghetti-and-sauerkraut menu (€4–7 entrées, Mon–Sat 11:00–1:00 in the morning, closed Sun, Ursulakloster 4–6, tel. 0221/131-712).

Winning the atmosphere award are **Papa Joe's Klimperkasten** (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible), in a dark pub packed with memorabilia and nightly live jazz (piano only, €4–8 meals, open daily for lunch and dinner, Alter Markt 50–52, tel. 0221/258-2132) and its rowdier sibling, **Papa Joe's Jazzlokal** (AE+A, AI, Level 3—Minimally Accessible; nightly from 20:00, Buttermarkt 37, tel. 0221/257-7931, www.papajoes.de for jazz schedule).

Gaffel Haus (AE+A, AI+A, Level 3—Minimally Accessible) serves good local food (€10 meals, daily until 24:00, near Lintgasse at Alter Markt 20–22, tel. 0221/257-7692). The staff can assist with the one 6" entry step and three more 6" steps up to the tables.

TRANSPORTATION CONNECTIONS

From Köln by Train to: Frankfurt Airport (at least hrly, 1 hr), **Koblenz** (4/hr, 1 hr), **Bacharach** or **St. Goar** (hrly, 1.5 hrs, transfer in Koblenz), **Bonn** (6/hr, 20 min), **Remagen** (2/hr, 30–60 min), **Aachen** (2/hr, 30–60 min), **Cochem** (every 2 hrs direct, 1.75 hrs; more with a transfer in Koblenz, 2 hrs), **Trier** (hrly, 2.75 hrs direct; more with a transfer in Koblenz, 2.75 hrs), **Paris** (7/day, 4 hrs), **Amsterdam** (every 2 hrs direct, 3 hrs; more with a transfer in Utrecht). Train info: tel. 11861 (€0.50/min).

Frankfurt

Frankfurt, the northern terminus of the Romantic Road, offers a good look at today's no-nonsense modern Germany. There's so much more to this country than castles and old cobbled squares.

You might fly into or out of Frankfurt am Main (nicknamed “Mainhattan” by locals because it's on the Main River), or at least pass through. While Frankfurt is Germany's trade and banking capital, leading the country in skyscrapers—mostly bank headquarters—a third of the city is green space. Especially in the area around the train station, you'll notice the fascinating multiethnic flavor of the city. A third of its 650,000 residents carry foreign passports.

Spending even two or three hours in Frankfurt leaves you with some powerful impressions. The city's great sights are 15 minutes from its train station, which is 12 minutes from its airport. For years, Frankfurt was a city to avoid...but today, it has a special energy that makes it worth a look.

Accessibility in Frankfurt

As a modern city (largely destroyed and rebuilt after World War II), Frankfurt offers fair accessibility (not as good as Köln, Mainz, or Koblenz). The city has made an admirable attempt to make streets accessible, but curb cuts are often rough and sidewalks range from smooth to cobbled and bumpy. Some new trams are fully accessible, as are some subway stops. The streets meet each other at every angle imaginable, and getting from point A to point B on foot or in a wheelchair can sometimes be a challenge.

Travelers with disabilities can pick up a guidebook called *Wegweiser—für Menschen mit Behinderungen* (in German only) featuring accessibil-

ity information on the city's sights. You can obtain the guidebook at home by calling (from the U.S.) 011-49-69-2123-5771 or writing Berliner Strasse 33–35, 60311 Frankfurt am Main, Deutschland. Another good resource for accessibility information is the Magistrate for Disability (www.frankfurt-handicap.de, friederikeschlegel@stadt-frankfurt.de).

ORIENTATION

(area code: 069)

Tourist Information

Frankfurt has several TIs. The handiest, offering an abundance of brochures and a free hotel-booking service, is inside the train station's main entrance (**AE, AI, AT**, Level 1—Fully Accessible; Mon–Fri 8:00–21:00, Sat–Sun 9:00–18:00, tel. 069/2123-8800, www.frankfurt-tourismus.de). Buy the city/subway map (the basic €0.50 version is fine—skip the detailed €1 map) and consider the *Frankfurt Welcome* brochure (€0.50). The TI sells the



Museum Ticket (€12, valid 2 days, covers 25 museums) and Frankfurt Card (see below), and offers bus tours of the city (see below). You'll find other TIs on Römerberg's square (Mon–Fri 9:30–17:30, Sat–Sun until 16:00), on the pedestrian shopping street Zeil, and at the airport.

The **Frankfurt Card** gives you a transit pass (including connections to and from the airport), 50 percent off all major museums, and 25 percent off the city bus tour, which virtually pays for the pass (€8/1 day, €12/2 days, sold at TI). If you're touring like mad for a day, this card can be worthwhile. Note that most museums are closed Monday and most are open until 20:00 on Wednesday (confirm at any TI).

The basic **city bus tour** (**AE+A**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) gives a 2.5-hour orientation to Frankfurt, including Römerberg, Goethe House, and (summer only) the Main Tower. Wheelchairs users need to be able to transfer into the bus; wheelchairs are folded and stored under the bus (€25, 25 percent discount with Frankfurt Card, recorded narration, April–Oct daily at 10:00 and 14:00, Nov–March daily at 14:00). The bus picks up at the Römerberg TI first, then 15 minutes later at the Frankfurt train station TI.

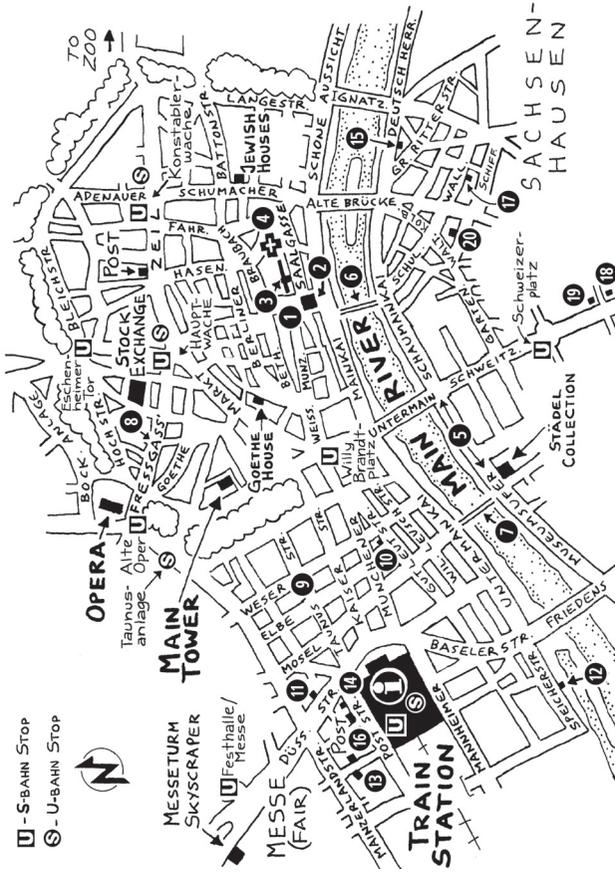
Frankfurt

Sights & Services

- 1 Römerberg (Market Square)
- 2 History Museum
- 3 Schirn Kunsthalle Arts Center
- 4 St. Bartholomew's Cathedral
- 5 Museum Embankment
- 6 Eiserner Steg Pedestrian Bridge
- 7 Holbein Pedestrian Bridge
- 8 Gourmet Street (Fressgass)
- 9 Red Light District

Hotels & Restaurants

- 10 Hotel Nizza
- 11 Hotel Manhattan
- 12 Ibis Hotel
- 13 Hotel Bristol
- 14 InterCityHotel Frankfurt
- 15 Haus der Jugend Hostel
- 16 The Symposium Rest.
- 17 Fichtekränzi Rest.
- 18 Adolf Wagner Rest.
- 19 Zum Gemalten Haus
- 20 Maingau Restaurant



Local Guide: Elisabeth Lücke loves her city and shares it very well (€50/hr, reserve in advance, tel. 06196/45787, www.elisabeth-luecke.de, elisabeth.luecke@t-online.de).

Arrival in Frankfurt

By Train: The Frankfurt train station (Hauptbahnhof; **AE, AI, AT**, Level 1—Fully Accessible) bustles with travelers. This is Germany's busiest train station: 350,000 travelers make their way to 25 platforms to catch 1,800 trains every day. While it was big news when it opened in the 1890s, it's a dead-end station, which, with today's high-speed trains, makes it outdated. In fact, the speedy ICE trains are threatening to bypass Frankfurt altogether unless it digs a tunnel to allow for a faster pass-through stop (a costly project is now in the discussion stage).

The TI is in the main hall just inside the front door. Lockers and baggage check (€3/day, daily 6:00–20:00) are in the main hall across from the TI. More lockers are at track 24, across from the post office (Mon–Fri 7:00–19:30, Sat 8:00–16:00, closed Sun, does not accept packages, automatic stamp machine outside). There is one wheelchair-accessible toilet, near track 9 (key available upon request from Railway Information booth behind tracks 12 and 13). Inquire about train tickets in the Reisezentrum across from track 9 (daily 6:00–22:00). Pick up a snack at the fine food court across from tracks 4 and 5. Above the Reisezentrum is a peaceful lounge with a snack bar, clean WCs, telephones, and a children's play area (free entry with ticket or railpass, free coffee and juice in first-class lounge). The station is a five-minute roll or stroll from the convention center (Messe), a three-minute subway ride from the center, or a 12-minute shuttle train from the airport.

By Plane: See "Frankfurt's Airport," page *TK.

Getting Around Frankfurt

By Public Transit: Frankfurt's public transit network includes buses, above-ground trams, and a mostly below-ground subway system (U-Bahn and S-Bahn). Some buses, trains, and stations are accessible, while others are not; before taking a trip, confirm that your journey is accessible. (For example, tram #11 from the train station to Römerberg is fully accessible, while the subway trip on that same route is not.) All modes of transport use the same tickets (*Fahrkarten*), which you can buy at an RMV machine. Find your destination on the chart, key in the number, choose your ticket type, then pay. Choose *Einzelfahrt* for a regular single ticket (€2.10), *Kurzstrecke* for a short ride (€1.60, 3 stops or less), or *Tageskarte* for an all-day pass (€4.90). A one-way ticket to the airport costs €3.35.

By Taxi: A taxi stand is just outside the main entrance of the train station to your left. An average ride to the Römerberg square should cost you €6 (more in slow traffic). To get to the airport from any of my recommended hotels, count on at least €22.

SIGHTS

Römerberg

I've listed these sights in the order of a brief self-guided sightseeing tour around Römerberg, Frankfurt's lively market square. Wheelchair users will encounter few curb cuts, some semi-buried railroad tracks, and many sections of cobblestone sidewalk. There are accessible toilets at the Starbucks on Römerberg and at Kaufhof Department Store at the top end of Römerberg.

Getting There: Römerberg is three-quarters of a mile east of the train station. You have several options for getting there: roll or stroll up Kaiserstrasse; take a taxi (€6); use the fully accessible tram #11 (with low floors for barrier-free boarding); or take a three-minute subway ride (take U-4 or U-5 line 2 stops to Römerberg; unfortunately, this only works for highly mobile slow walkers, since there's an elevator at Römerberg, but not at train station; also, the subway cars aren't accessible, with a post in the middle of the entry door).

- *Our tour begins at the square called...*

▲Römerberg—Frankfurt's market square was the birthplace of the city. The town hall (*Römer*) houses the *Kaisersaal*, or Imperial Hall, where Holy Roman Emperors celebrated their coronations. Today, the *Römer* houses the city council and mayor's office. The cute row of half-timbered houses (rebuilt in 1983) opposite the *Römer* is typical of Frankfurt's quaint old center before World War II.



- *Go past the red-and-white church downhill, toward the river to Frankfurt's...*

History Museum (Historisches Museum)—Most won't want to spend time in the actual museum upstairs (accessible by lift—ask attendant; €4, 2 floors of artifacts, paintings, and displays—without a word of English). But the wheelchair-accessible models in the ground-floor annex are fascinating (€1, follow signs to *Altstadtmodelle*, English film and explanations). Study the maps of medieval Frankfurt. The wall sur-



rounding the city was torn down in the early 1800s to make the ring of parks and lakes you see on your modern map. The long, densely packed row of houses on the eastern end of town was Frankfurt's Jewish ghetto from 1462 to 1796. The five original houses that survive comprise one of the city's two Jewish Museums. (Frankfurt is the birthplace of Anne Frank and the

Rothschild banking family.) The big model in the middle of the room shows the town in the 1930s. Across from it, you can see the horror that befell the town in 1940, 1943, and on the "fatal night" of March 23, 1944. This last Allied bombing accomplished its goal of demoralizing the city. Find the facade of the destroyed city hall—where you just were. The film behind this model is a good 15-minute tour of Frankfurt through the ages (ask them to change the language for you—"Auf Englisch, bitte?"). At the model of today's Frankfurt, orient yourself, then locate the riverfront (a nice detour with a grassy park and fun Eiserner Steg pedestrian bridge—**AE, AL**, Level 1—Fully Accessible—to the left as you leave this museum), and the long, skinny "pistol" (the Schirn arts exhibition center) pointing at the cathedral—where you're going next.

Access: **AE+A, AI, AL**, Level 2—Moderately Accessible. To gain entry to the museum, wheelchair users need to press the outside button to notify the staff.

Hours and Location: Tue–Sun 10:00–17:00, Wed until 20:00, Sat 13:00–17:00, closed Mon, Saalgasse 19, tel. 069/2123-5599, www.historisches-museum.frankfurt.de.

• *Leaving the museum, turn right to...*

Saalgasse—Literally called "hall street," this lane of postmodern buildings echoes the higgledy-piggledy buildings that stood here until World War II. In the 1990s, famous architects from around the world were each given a ruined house of the same width and told to design a new building to reflect the building that stood there before the war. As you continue down the street, guess which one is an upside-down half-timbered house with the stars down below. (Hint: Animals are



on the “ground floor.”)

Saalgasse leads to some ancient **Roman ruins** (AE+A, Level 2—Moderately Accessible, ramp near church entrance leads to four 6” steps for access to full exhibit) in front of St. Bartholomew’s Cathedral. The grid of stubs was the subfloor of a Roman bath (allowing the floor to be heated). The small monument in the middle of the ruins commemorates the 794 meeting of Charlemagne (king of the Franks and first Holy Roman Emperor) with the local bishop—the first official mention of a town called Frankfurt. When Charlemagne and the Franks fled from the Saxons, a white deer led them to the easiest place to cross the Main—where the Franks could ford the river—hence, Frankfurt. The skyscraper with the yellow emblem in the distance is the tallest office block in Europe (985 feet). Next to it, with the red-and-white antenna, is the Main Tower (open to the public—see below).



St. Bartholomew’s Cathedral (Kaiserdom)—Ten Holy Roman Emperors were elected and crowned in this cathedral between 1562 and 1792. The church was destroyed in World War II, rebuilt, and reopened in 1955. Twenty-seven scenes from the life of St. Bartholomew (Bartholomäus, in German) flank the high altar and ring the choir. Everything of value was moved to safety before the bombs came. But the delightful red sandstone chapel of Sleeping Mary (to the left of the high altar), carved and painted in the 15th century, was too big to move—so it was fortified with sandbags. The altarpiece and fine stained glass next to it survived the bombing (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible; free, Sat–Thu 9:00–12:00 & 14:30–17:00, closed Fri, enter on side opposite river).

• *From the cathedral, it’s a short roll or stroll back to Römerberg or to the Zeil, Frankfurt’s lively department store-lined pedestrian boulevard. Or you can explore more of Frankfurt’s sights, such as the Main Tower.*

Between Römerberg and the Station

▲ **Main Tower**—Finished in 2000, this tower houses the Helaba Bank and offers the best public viewpoint from a Frankfurt skyscraper. A 45-second, ear-popping elevator ride—and then 55 steps—takes you to the 55th floor, 650 feet above the city.

Access: The observation deck is Level 4—Not Accessible (must climb 55 steps from elevator to deck). But wheelchair users and other

visitors with limited mobility (and companions) will be accompanied to the part of the roof next to the restaurant, just below the observation deck, where you'll enjoy similar views.

Cost, Hours, Location: Free passage to restaurant deck for limited-mobility visitors and their companions, otherwise €4.50 for observation deck, daily 10:00–21:00, Fri–Sat until 23:00, last entry 30 min before closing, enter at Neue Mainzer Strasse 52, near corner of Neue Schlesingerstrasse, tel. 069/365-4777.



➔ **Self-Guided Tour:** The Main Tower is wheelchair-accessible up to the restaurant level, where a special outdoor viewing deck lets wheelchair users and their companions see the whole city. Slow walkers and non-disabled people can consider taking the final 55 steps to the top of the building, Frankfurt's ultimate viewpoint. If you do venture to the top, here's what you'll see (surveying clockwise, starting with the biggest skyscraper, with the yellow emblem).

1. Commerce Bank Building: Designed by Norman Foster (of Berlin Reichstag and London City Hall fame), the Commerce Bank building was finished in 1997. It's 985 feet high, with nine winter gardens spiraling up its core. Just to the left is Römerberg—the old town center. Look to the right (clockwise).

2. European Central Bank: The blue and gold euro symbol (€) decorates the front yard of the Euro Tower, home of the European Central Bank (a.k.a. "City of the Euro"). Its 1,000 employees administer the all-Europe currency from here. Typical of skyscrapers in the 1970s, it's slim—to allow maximum natural light into all workplaces inside. The euro symbol in the park was unveiled on January 1, 2002, the day the euro went into circulation in the 12 Eurozone countries.

The Museum Embankment lines Schaumainkai (see "Across the River," in "Sights," page *TK) on the far side of the Main River, just beyond the Euro Tower.

3. Airport: The Rhine-Main Airport, in the distance, is the largest employment complex in Germany (62,000 workers). Frankfurt's massive train station dominates the foreground. From the station, the grand Kaiserstrasse cuts through the city to Römerberg.

4. Messe: The Frankfurt fair (Messe), marked by the skyscraper with the pointy top, is a huge convention center—the size of 40 soccer fields. It sprawls behind the skyscraper that looks like a classical column sporting a visor-like capital. (The protruding lip of the capital is heated so that icicles don't form, break off, and impale people on the street below.) Frankfurt's fair originated in 1240, when the emperor promised all participating merchants safe passage (www.messefrankfurt.com). The black twin towers of the Deutsche Bank in the foreground are typical of mid-1980s mirrored architecture.

5. West End and Good Living: The West End—with vast green spaces and the telecommunications tower—is Frankfurt's trendiest residential quarter. The city's "good-living spine" cuts from the West End to the right. Stretching from the classic-looking **Opera House** are broad and people-filled boulevards made to order for eating and shopping. Your skyscraper spin-tour is over. Why don't you go join them?

Opera House, Gourmet Street, and Zeil—From the Opera House to pedestrian boulevards, this is Frankfurt's good-living spine (fully accessible for wheelchair users). The Opera House was finished in 1880 to celebrate high German culture and the newly created nation. When they see both Mozart and Goethe flanking the entrance, all are reminded that this is a house of both music and theater. The original opera house was destroyed in World War II. Over the objections of a mayor nicknamed "Dynamite Rudy," the city rebuilt it in the original style (U-Bahn: Alte Oper). Facing the opera, turn right and go down a restaurant-lined boulevard (Grosse Bockenheimer) nicknamed "Gourmet Street" (*Fressgass*). (Frankfurt's version of Fifth Avenue, lined with top fashion shops, is the parallel Goethe Strasse.) Gourmet Street leads to Zeil, a lively, tree-lined, festival-of-life pedestrian boulevard and department-store strip.

Across the River

The Schaumainkai riverside promenade (across the river, over Eiserner Steg pedestrian bridge from Römerberg) is great for an evening roll or stroll—or for people-watching on any sunny day. Keep your eyes peeled for nude sunbathers. On Saturdays, the museum strip street is closed off for a sprawling flea market.

Sachsenhausen District and Frankfurt's Culinary Specialties—Rather than beer-garden ambience, Frankfurt offers an apple-wine pub district. The area is moderately accessible, with sometimes bumpy streets. For a traditional eating-and-drinking zone with more than a hundred characteristic apple-wine pubs (and plenty of ethnic and other options), visit cobbled and cozy Sachsenhausen (wander to the east end of Schaumainkai, or

from the train station take tram #16 to Schweizerplatz, also see “Eating,” page *TK). *Apfelwein*, drunk around here since Charlemagne’s time 1,200 years ago, became more popular in the 16th century, when local grapes were diseased. It enjoyed another boost two centuries later, when a climate change meant that grapes grew poorly in the area. Apple wine is about the strength of beer (5.5 percent alcohol). It’s served spiced and warm in winter, cold in summer. To complement your traditional drink with a traditional meal, order Frankfurt sausage or pork chops and kraut.

Frankfurt’s Museum Embankment (Museumsufer)—The Museum Embankment features nine museums lining the Main River along Schaumainkai (mostly west of Eiserner Steg pedestrian bridge). In the 1980s, Frankfurt decided that it wanted to buck its “Bankfurt” and “Krankfurt” (*krank* means “sick”) image. It went on a culture kick and devoted 11 percent of the city budget to the arts and culture. The result: Frankfurt has become a city of art. Today, locals and tourists alike enjoy an impressive strip of museums housed in striking buildings. These nine museums (including architecture, film, world cultures, and great European masters—the Städel Collection) and a dozen others are all well described in the TI’s *Museumsufer* brochure (covered by €12 Museum Ticket sold at TI and participating museums, good for 2 days, most museums Tue–Sun 10:00–17:00, Wed until 20:00, closed Mon, www.kultur.frankfurt.de).

SLEEPING

Avoid driving or sleeping in Frankfurt, since the city’s numerous trade fairs send hotel prices skyrocketing. The busiest months for trade fairs are generally January, March, May, September, and November. July and December have almost none, and the rest of the months fall somewhere in between (an average of 7 days a month). Visit www.messefrankfurt.com (and select “Trade Fairs”) for an exact schedule. To sleep at the airport, see “Frankfurt’s Airport,” below.

Sleep Code

(€1 = about \$1.20, country code: 49, area code: 069)

S = Single, **D** = Double/Twin, **T** = Triple, **Q** = Quad, **b** = bathroom, **s** = shower only. Unless otherwise noted, credit cards are accepted, English is spoken, and breakfast is included.

Level 1—Fully Accessible

Nizza (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB) is in a beautiful old building in the city center, with rooms furnished with antiques and artwork. In summer, breakfast is served on the rooftop garden, with good views of the city and skyline (Db-€75–105, Elbestrasse 10, tel. 069/242-5380).

Ibis (AE, AB, AL, AR, AB), well-located between the train station and Römerberg on the riverbank, is a functional and tidy hotel with two fully adapted rooms, a restaurant, snack shop, bar with happy hour, and free Internet access (Db-€59, Speicherstrasse 4, tel. 069/273-030, www.ibishotel.com).

InterCityHotel Frankfurt (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB) has 384 modern rooms (including 1 wheelchair-accessible room with a fully adapted bathroom) and offers four-star amenities (Sb/Db rates vary wildly depending on demand, from €70 to €220, Poststrasse 8, tel. 069/273-910, fax 069/2739-1999, www.intercityhotel.de, frankfurt@intercityhotel.de).

Hostel: The **Haus der Jugend (AE, AI, AR, AL, AB)** is a fine, accessible option for travelers on a budget. It's open to guests of any age (€20–24 per bed in 8- and 10-bed dorms, €24–28 in 3–4 bed dorms, Sb-€39–43, Db-€34–38, higher prices are for guests over age 27, includes daily hostel membership fee, sheets and breakfast, 470 beds, €4.80 for lunch or dinner, Internet access in lobby, laundry, curfew-2:00 in the morning, take bus #46 direction Mühlberg—goes 3/hr from station to Frankenstein Platz, Deutschherrnufer 12, tel. 069/610-0150, fax 069/6100-1599, www.jugendherberge-frankfurt.de, jugendherberge_frankfurt@t-online.de).

Level 2—Moderately Accessible

Hotel Manhattan (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB+A), with 60 sleek, arty rooms, is beautifully located across from the station. An unusual mix of warm and accommodating staff with all the business-class comforts, it's a good splurge on a first or last night in Europe (Db-€90, more during conventions, kids under 12 free, elevator, free Internet access in lobby, Düsseldorf Strasse 10, tel. 069/269-5970, fax 069/2695-97777, www.manhattan-hotel.com, manhattan-hotel@t-online.de, Herr Rosen). They have one room set aside for wheelchair users, with an accessible toilet but a non-accessible bath/shower.

Hotel Bristol (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB+A) is a swanky new boutique hotel run by Michael Rosen, owner of the Manhattan hotel. The Bristol reflects a new generation of train-station hotels, serving up the most style and flair for your money. The place is young, hip, and modern, from its nod to Pacific Rim architecture to its teak-furnished patio café called Summer Lounge. Thirsty? Have a drink at the 24-hour bar downstairs.

Just two blocks from the station, it's surprisingly quiet (€95, more during conventions, free Internet in lobby, huge breakfast buffet, elevator, Ludwigstrasse 15, tel. 069/242-390, fax 069/251-539, www.bristol-hotel.de, info@bristol-hotel.de).

EATING

Near the Train Station

Everything in the train station, including eateries, shops, and outlets, is accessible. Several good Middle Eastern takeout places are one block from the station, up Taunusstrasse toward the Red Light District.

The Symposium (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible), near the train station across from Hotel Bristol, is a New World Mediterranean restaurant, bar, and patio, serving beautifully presented, innovative, fresh cuisine (€5–15 entrées, daily 10:00–24:00, Ludwigstrasse 7, tel. 069/9494-2355).

In Sachsenhausen

The Sachsenhausen District—on the other side of the river, a simple roll or stroll from Schweitzerplatz—abounds with traditional apple-wine pubs (see page *TK). All the ones I've listed have both indoor and outdoor seating in a woodsy, rustic setting. Not just for tourists, these characteristic places are popular with Frankfurters, too. If you are craving *Leiterchen* ("ladders," or spare ribs), these are your best bet. Here are two more local specialties, available at most apple-wine bars, for the adventurous to try: Boiled eggs and beef topped with a green sauce of seven herbs (*Grüne Sosse*), or an aged, cylindrical, ricotta-like cheese served with onions and vinegar, called *Handkäse mit Musik* ("hand cheese with music").

Adolf Wagner (AE, AI, Level 2—Moderately Accessible) is a traditional joint that serves a local constituency. It tends to get a little smoky, so try to score a table in the outside courtyard area (€7–11 entrées, daily 11:00–24:00, Schweizer Strasse 71, tel. 069/612-565).

Fichtekränzi (AE+A, AI, Level 3—Minimally Accessible) offers the typical specialties (and some lighter fare) both in its cozy picnic-table and bench-filled beer hall, and outside under the trees. The staff is friendly and the atmosphere relaxed (€7–12 entrées, daily from 17:00, Wall Strasse 5, tel. 069/612-778).

Zum Gemalten Haus (AE+A, AI, Level 3—Minimally Accessible), named for the wall murals that adorn the facade of the building, serves German cuisine and is deceptively mellow—it's rumored to get a little wild on the weekends (€10–20 entrées, Wed–Sun 10:00–24:00, closed

Mon–Tue, Schweizer Strasse 67, tel. 069/614-559).

Irish pubs and salsa bars clutter the pedestrian zone around Rittergasse and Klappergasse, just north of the Affentor. The cobblestone streets and medieval buildings feel like Epcot Center, rather than historic Frankfurt, but if you're looking for a place to do a pub crawl, this is it.

For a break from traditional German food and pubs, splurge at **Maingau** (AE+A, AI, Level 3—Minimally Accessible). Repeatedly hailed as one of the best restaurants in Frankfurt, it boasts an extensive wine list, fancy tasting menus, recommended wine pairings, and an international lineup, including filet of venison and vegetarian options such as thyme-infused risotto. For less of an investment, indulge in a three-course lunch special. Don't be fooled by its modest exterior—this place is elegant inside (€13–20 entrées, tasting *menus*—€13–30 for lunch, €25–46 for dinner, more with wine pairings, Tue–Fri 11:30–15:00 & 17:00–22:30, Sat 18:00–22:30, Sun 11:30–15:00, closed Mon, call for reservations tel. 069/610-752, Schiffer Strasse 38, www.maingau.de).

TRANSPORTATION CONNECTIONS

Frankfurt am Main

From Frankfurt by Train to: **Bacharach** (hrly, 1.5 hrs, change in Mainz; first train to Bacharach departs at 6:00, last train at 20:45), **Koblenz** (hrly, 1.5 hrs direct), **Köln** (almost hrly, 1.25 hrs direct; more with a transfer at Frankfurt Airport), **Rothenburg** (hrly, 3 hrs, changes in Würzburg and Steinach; the tiny Steinach–Rothenburg train often leaves from track 5, shortly after the Würzburg train arrives), **Würzburg** (hrly, 2 hrs), **Nürnberg** (hrly, 2 hrs), **Munich** (hrly, 4 hrs, 1 change), **Baden-Baden** (2/hr, 1.5 hrs, transfer in Mannheim or Karlsruhe), **Freiburg** (hrly, 2 hrs, change in Mannheim), **Bonn** (hrly, 1.75 hrs direct), **Berlin** (hrly, 6 hrs), **Amsterdam** (every 2 hrs, 4.5 hrs direct, more with a transfer in Utrecht), **London** (6/day, 8 hrs, 3 changes), **Milan** (hrly, 9 hrs, 2 changes), **Paris** (9/day, 6.5 hrs, up to 3 changes), **Bern** (hrly, 4.5 hrs, changes in Mannheim and Basel), **Brussels** (hrly, 5 hrs, change in Köln), **Copenhagen** (6/day, 9 hrs, change in Hamburg), **Vienna** (8/day, 8 hrs, 2 changes). Train info: tel. 11861 (€0.46/min).

Frankfurt's Airport

The airport (*Flughafen*) is user-friendly. There are two separate terminals (know your terminal, call the airline). All trains and subways operate out of Terminal 1 (but taxis serve both). A skyline train connects the two

terminals. The airport offers showers (€6), a baggage-check desk (daily 6:00–22:00, €3.50 per bag/day), lockers (€3–5/24 hrs, depending on size), free Internet access (at the *e-lounge* by departures Terminal 1B), ATMs, fair banks with long hours, a grocery store (daily 6:30–21:30, Terminal 1, on level 0 between sectors A and B), a post office, a train station, a business lounge (Europe City Club—€16/4 hrs for anyone with a plane ticket, on departure level, daily 7:00–22:00), easy rental-car pickup, plenty of parking, an information booth, a pharmacy (7:00–21:30, Terminal 1/B), a medical clinic (Terminal 1C), a casino, and even McBeer. McWelcome to Germany. If you're meeting someone, each terminal has a hard-to-miss "meeting point" near where arriving passengers pop out.

Access: Travelers with limited mobility will be transported by electric cart to the baggage claim or the gate. If you're using a gate-checked wheelchair, ask for assistance in order to gain access to the elevator that will take you to the lower level. The toilets located in the arrival halls are accessible; toilets at the baggage-claim area are not. Taxis will take wheelchair users if the baggage and wheelchair will fit in the trunk (AE+A, Level 2—Moderately Accessible). For train station access, see "Trains," below.

Airport Info (in English): For flight information, tel. 01805/372-4636 (www.frankfurt-airport.de) or contact the airlines directly during business hours (wait for an announcement in English): Lufthansa—tel. 01803-803-803 or 069/6969-4433, American Airlines—tel. 01803-242-324 or 069/6902-1781, Delta—tel. 01803-337-880 or 069/6902-8751, Northwest/KLM—01805-214-201 or 069/6902-1831. Pick up the free brochure *Your Airport-Assistant* for a map and detailed information on airport services (available at the airport and at most Frankfurt hotels).

Getting to the Airport: The airport is a 12-minute train ride from downtown (€3.30, 4/hr, ride included in €8 Frankfurt Card but not in €4.70 all-day *Tageskarte* transit pass). Figure around €25 for a taxi from any of my recommended hotels.

Trains: The airport has its own train station (Terminal 1). Train travelers can validate railpasses or buy tickets at the airport station. To connect by train to Frankfurt or beyond, check in with the airport's Deutsche Bahn (DB) Information Booth (located in airport's regional train station, Terminal 1, Level O, Booth 316). The DB staff can assist the wheelchair user to the appropriate train platform, and then onto the train. The DB staff will also contact train personnel at train stations for either interim or final destination assistance disembarking. (Smaller, unmanned stations—such as in Bacharach and St. Goar—do not offer this service.)

From Frankfurt Airport by Train to: Köln (at least hrly, 1 hr), **Koblenz** (hrly, 1.25 hrs, more with a transfer in Mainz), **Bacharach** (hrly, 1 hr, change in Mainz; first train to Bacharach departs at 6:00, last train at 21:00), **Rothenburg** (hrly, 3 hrs, with transfers in Würzburg and Steinach), **Würzburg** (2/hr, 2 hrs), **Nürnberg** (hrly, 2 hrs), **Munich** (2/hr, 4 hrs, 1 change), **Baden-Baden** (every 2 hrs, 1.5 hrs direct; more with a transfer in Mainz, 1.5 hrs), and **international destinations** (such as Paris, London, Amsterdam, Vienna, Milan, and many more).

Flying Home from Frankfurt: Some of the trains from the Rhine stop at the airport on their way into Frankfurt (e.g., hrly 90-min rides direct from Bonn; hrly 90-min rides from Bacharach with a change in Mainz; earliest train from Bacharach to Frankfurt leaves about 5:40, last train at 21:30). By car, head toward Frankfurt on the autobahn and follow the little airplane signs to the airport.

Sleeping at Frankfurt Airport: You can sleep at the airport, but you'll pay a premium and miss out on seeing Frankfurt. Considering the ease of the shuttle train from Frankfurt (12 min, 4/hr), I don't advise it. But if you must, the airport **Sheraton** (AE, AI, AL, AT, AR, AB, Level 1—Fully Accessible) has one fully adapted room for wheelchair users (#3081) and a thousand standard, international business-class rooms (rates vary wildly depending on season and conventions, but Db usually around €200–250, about 25 percent discount with major corporate ID—try anything, AAA and senior discounts, kids up to 18 free in the room, includes big breakfast, non-smoking rooms, fitness club, Terminal 1, tel. 069/69770, fax 069/6977-2351, www.sheraton.com/frankfurt, salesfrankfurt@sheraton.com). Most other bedrooms are accessible for wheelchair users, but without adapted bathrooms. The staff can assist wheelchair users in getting between the airport and the hotel.

The **Ibis** (AE, AI, AL, AR, AB, Level 1—Fully Accessible) has cheaper rooms in the same neighborhood, but it isn't as handy and the staff is rude (Db-€80–100, breakfast-€9, includes free accessible airport shuttle, Langer Kornweg 9a-11, Kelsterbach, tel. 06107/9870, fax 06107/987-444, www.ibishotel.com, h2203@accor-hotels.com).

Route Tips for Drivers

Frankfurt to Rothenburg: The three-hour autobahn drive from the airport to Rothenburg is something even a jet-lagged zombie can handle. It's a 75-mile straight shot to Würzburg on A-3; just follow the blue autobahn signs to Würzburg. While you can carry on to Rothenburg by autobahn, for a scenic back-road approach, leave the freeway at the Heidingsfeld-Würzburg exit. If going directly to Rothenburg, follow signs south to

Stuttgart/Ulm/Road 19, then continue to Rothenburg via a scenic slice of the Romantic Road. If stopping at Würzburg, leave the freeway at the Heidingsfeld-Würzburg exit and follow Stadtmitte, then Centrum and Residenz signs from the same freeway exit. From Würzburg, Ulm/Road 19 signs lead to Bad Mergentheim and Rothenburg.

Frankfurt to the Rhine: Driving from Frankfurt to the Rhine or Mosel takes 90 minutes (follow blue autobahn signs from airport, major cities are signposted).

The Rhine to Frankfurt: From St. Goar or Bacharach, follow the river to Bingen, then autobahn signs to Mainz, then Frankfurt, then Messe, and finally the Hauptbahnhof (train station). The Hauptbahnhof garage (€15/day) is under the station near all recommended hotels.