

The Lahntal (Lahn River Valley)



Tour Overview: This tour will take you from Feudingingen to Lahnstein (close to Koblenz). Feudingingen is the closest one can get by train to the source of the Lahn so it makes a good starting place. This is a 4-day 146-mile (235 km) ride. The ride is mostly flat, punctuated by a very few hills. The only major hilly area begins at the end of the tour. However, there is a train ride around these ugly, high-traffic, hills that we recommend highly.

This is a great ride if you want to see a part of Germany that few people see. This ride is not as well traveled as some of the rides in the south like the Danube but it is fairly easy, very beautiful, and just as historic. So, if you want a great experience away from other tourists and you only have a few days; this is your ride.

Signage: This route is reasonably well signed. The sign is square, green on white, showing the pictogram of a bicycle with the word "Lahn" beneath it. Several "long distance" bike routes that have names like "R-2" and "R-7" overlay the route. Try not to be confused when these other routes veer off in a direction different from that of the Lahn bike path. If you get off the path, just check your map and re-find the route or ask anyone, "Wo ist der Lahn Radweg," and you will be given directions.

Between Giessen and Limburg, you will be following the R-7 bike route. Thereafter the signs are green with white letters spelling out "Lahntalradweg" (Lahn Valley bike path) and "R-36."

The signage ends in Lahnstein where the Lahn joins the Rhine River. You can have caught a train in Lahnstein or take this opportunity to do some sightseeing in the city of Koblenz, just a few short miles down the Rhine.

Stops: The most interesting stops are Marburg, Limburg, Bad Ems, and Lahnstein/Koblenz. There are numerous cities and villages with significant history, that is dating back 800 to 1,200 years. A real pleasure of this ride is the scenery, especially around Marburg between Weilburg and Bad Ems.

Feudingingen to Marburg

Overview: This ride will be 37.5 miles (60 km). It is an easy ride to Marburg and most of it is on good bike trails. For all but the slowest riders, there is probably enough time to take an early train to Feudingingen and spend the first night in Marburg. Starting the day in Feudingingen will enhance your enjoyment of the ride.

There are a couple 60-foot hills along the way but nothing too steep. There are short stretches of gravel, one of which is somewhat messy to ride on.

Start the trip at the *Bahnhof* in Feudingingen.

Enter Bad Laasphe. This is a "Kurort" or a spa town; a place where Germans, with the financial help of the national healthcare system, come for a few weeks of resort-like spa treatments and recovery from some of their ailments. That means there are plenty of hotels, restaurants, shopping opportunities, and other tourist related businesses. Cross the Lahn.

Enter Wallau after climbing another 60-foot hill. On the way down, watch your speed. The long-distance bike route signed as "R-2" joins the *Lahnradweg* in Wallau.

Enter Ludwigshütte after a long, gentle, downhill on a good path.

Ride through the edge of Buchenau. Enter the Lahntal community of Sarnau. There the bike path will cross the train tracks. You will ride up to an interesting *Schranke* (RR crossing barrier). The translation of the sign on the box says, "Please push the call button to request the barrier to be opened." Along the river and the train tracks you will arrive the university town of MARBURG.

An air of history reigns throughout this city. Past and present can here be found as a unity. New life fills this historical buildings. Young students animate the old lanes. Variety in details above all. Tolerance-this is MARBURG.

Take a night and a day here. Stay in the www.waldecker-hof-marburg.de. Hotel direct at the Lahn bike path by railway station.

Important historical buildings are the Elisabeth church, earliest, purely Gothic church on German ground; beside the church the „Deutsche Haus“; on the market place the Rathaus, where at every hour the old clock strikes, the rooster crows, the guardian blows and death turns the hour-glass. High on the top, where in the middle of a sea of smells and blossoms the grey huge castle rises to guard Phillips old town. The 1527 by landgrave Phillip founded first protestant university.

Marburg to Wetzlar

Overview: Today's ride will be only 31 miles (50 km). You can spend much time for sightseeing in Marburg in the morning. The path is almost flat and what gravel there is well packed and easy riding.

You ride along the river, arable ground, castles and towers. Next stop can be the university town of Giessen, a contrast of what you had seen before. The end of this part of tour is the town Wetzlar with its cathedral and frame work houses.

Wetzlar to Runkel

Overview: Today ride 39 miles (63 km) to Runkel. There are a couple steep hills, one going into Weilburg and one going into Villmar. The path is mostly paved and is in good condition.

The *Altstadt* of Wetzlar to check out this historic, walled city. A major trade route between the well-established cities of Frankfurt and Köln, Wetzlar was the site of a bridge over the Lahn in the beginning of the 13th Century.

Mile 23.1 (37.2 km): Enter Weilburg. The city center is on top of a 70-foot hill at mile 24.1. At the top where you see the historic city gate, jog left then right following the R-7 signs. The path for the next several miles is as pretty as the river valleys of Germany get. Nice green rolling hills bowing gently to a slow moving, meandering river bottom.

Ride over the Marmorbrücke (Marble Bridge) in Villmar.

Arrival Runkel with the old Lahn bridge. The stone bridge was built 552 years ago in 1498. The castle is just as old but it is not open to the public when the owner is staying there.

Runkel to Lahnstein

Overview: Tour- ride 34 miles (54 km) today. There are five hills today, like the 140-foot hill outside Obernhof up to the Arnstein Monastery. Like the last two days, the path is mostly paved.

Start the day at the Runkel Bridge- ride on the right bank of the Lahn in the direction of Limburg.

Climb the 90-foot hill into Dietkirchen. It is worth it because the view over the river valley from the church courtyard is gorgeous. Undoubtedly, the faithful parishioners have treaded this path from the village below to the church above for centuries.

Remember, in addition to the Lahn bike path, you are following R-7.

You will enter Limburg. Limburg has a picturesque town straight out of the Middle Ages. It is well worth a couple hours walking around.

Puff-puff, you are climbing a 120-foot hill and we notice the signage for the Lahn bike path changes to a pale green and white sign marking the Lahntal (Lahn Valley) bike route and R-36.

Here is a big sign stating “*Der Radweg endet hier!*” (The bike path ends here!). We are across the river from Balduinstein and have just ridden through a particularly beautiful part of the Lahn Valley. One of the things that make it beautiful is how the steep hills drop into the river bottom. Take the train for the next stretch of the Lahntal bike route to Obernhof.

The ride is 15 minutes to Obernhof. Looking up, we see the medieval Kloster Arnstein high on the hill overlooking the village. This structure was originally built as a castle for Graf Arnold in 1050. Arnold’s son gave it to the church in 1139 and it became a monastery, undoubtedly as an “indulgence”, which, at the time, was how one bought one’s way into heaven. The Swedish Army, who fought on the side of the Protestants during the Thirty-Year War, plundered the monastery twice before 1638. The good news is that it makes a great photograph. The bad news is, you get to ride up and see it.

You are at Kloster Arnstein; take the signed R-36, Lahntal path over rolling terrain (a few hills) then back down to river level in the direction of Nassau.

Here you will notice a small, tombstone-like “*Grenzstein*”. These stone markers were used to demark boundaries of principalities, petty nobility ownerships in the Middle Ages. At one time, just after the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 (the end of the Thirty-Year War), Germany was divided into 1,800 separate, independent states. You can imagine that they needed quite a few of these *Grenzsteine*. If one were alive then, one would have done well with *Grenzstein* futures.

Enter Nassau, make a stop at the historical „Wirtshaus an der Lahn“ before you take the last ride for this day direction Bad Ems.

Cross the Lahn to the right bank in Bad Ems. The valley has steep walls along this section. You have to climb up and drop down several hills of 50-feet or more. Another advantage of this part of the trail, you pass many castles and other medieval structures perched on the hilltops.

End your bike tour travelogue at the confluence of the Lahn and the Rhine in Lahnstein. You can see one of the many castles that line the Rhine across the river. In this case, it is Schloss Stolzenfels.

