

Thuringia Tour Options

Hiking and Cycling

Content

RENNSTEIG	2
Rennsteig Hiking Tours.....	3
Western Thuringian Forest. Eisenach – Oberhof.....	3
Through the heart of the Thuringian Forest. Oberhof – Neuhaus.....	4
Rennsteig Ladders.....	5
Rennsteig Ladder Eisenach	5
Rennsteig Ladder Oberweißbach	5
Rennsteig Ladder Lehesten	5
OTHER TRAILS	6
Saale Horizontale	6
The whole route in 6 days	6
Hainich National Park Routes	7
Ilm Valley Cycle Path	7
Saale River Cycle Path	8
FURTHER ROUTE TIPS.....	9

Trade Contact Thuringia Tourism

Annett Morche-Ruthmann
 Phone: +49 361 3742 230
a.morche-ruthmann@thueringen-entdecken.de,

RENNSTEIG



A “classic” route, well sign-posted with a capital white “R”.

The Rennsteig in the Thuringian Forest is Germany’s best-known mountain ridge trail, and on the must-do list of many hikers. There is also a route for cyclists, and in winter it is a popular cross-country trail.

The hiking trail is around 170 km long and stretches over the mountain tops in the Thuringian Forest from west to east (You can also walk it the other way round, but west-east is the traditional way to do it). Once you are on the Rennsteig there are no dramatic up-hill parts any longer and the level is throughout easy to medium.

There are more than 40 paths leading from the valleys up to the Rennsteig – these are called “Rennsteig ladders” (although they are no ladders in the actual sense of the word). They make attractive shorter tours or combinations with the main route possible.

Rennsteig [video on youtube](#)

Rennsteig Hiking Tours

Tours of the whole Rennsteig, from Hörschel to Blankenstein take between 8 and 12 days, depending on distances covered per day. You can split the route into various shorter parts and maybe combine these with “Rennsteig ladders”.

Western Thuringian Forest. Eisenach – Oberhof

Day 1: travel to Eisenach, accommodation in Eisenach

Day 2: Rennsteig ladder Eisenach, uphill through Dragon Gorge, visit of Wartburg Castle (UNESCO World Cultural Heritage) and downhill back into town via Luther Path, accommodation in Eisenach

Day 3: transportation to Hohe Sonne (Rennsteig near Wartburg) and hiking tour on Rennsteig to Ruhla, ca. 10 km; accommodation in Ruhla

Day 4: continue hiking tour from Ruhla via Inselsberg (uphill) to Brotterode via Rennsteig ladder Brotterode (downhill), ca. 14 km (alternatively: pickup at Inselsberg and transportation to Brotterode – saves 3-4 km of walking); accommodation in Brotterode

Day 5: Rennsteig ladder Brotterode to Rennsteig (ca. 3.5 km) – alternatively transportation to Rennsteig; continue hiking tour on Rennsteig to Ebertswiese (ca. 13 km); accommodation at Berghotel Ebertswiese

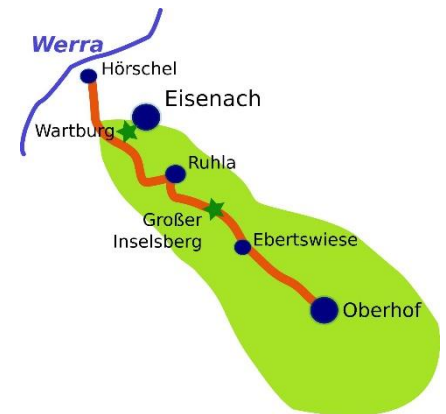
Day 6: Continue hiking tour from Ebertswiese to Oberhof, ca. 20 km on Rennsteig; accommodation in Oberhof

Day 7: visit of Rennsteig Garden in Oberhof and spa options in town; accommodation in Oberhof

Day 8: end of tour, departure from Oberhof

Highlights along the route include:

- Eisenach with Wartburg Castle (UNESCO World Cultural Heritage), Bach House and Luther House museums, Dragon Gorge and Luther Path
- Großer Inselsberg (916.5 m), mountain with viewing tower and gastronomy
- Ebertswiese mountain meadows biotope and little mountain lake (hotel and gastronomy)
- Oberhof sports facilities and thermal spa facility (Oberhof is a small town. It has an Olympic training centre for winter sports, especially biathlon, bob-sleigh and ski jumping); Rennsteig Garden (large alpine botanical garden with great views)

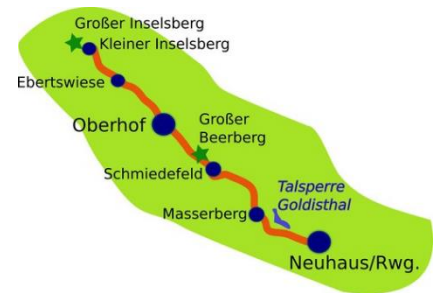


Through the heart of the Thuringian Forest. Oberhof – Neuhaus

Day 1: travel to Oberhof; accommodation in Oberhof

Day 2: hiking tour from Oberhof to Schmiedefeld via Großer Beerberg (982.9 m), ca. 22 km; accommodation in Schmiedefeld (Hotel Gastinger)

Day 3: regional (short) hiking options in the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve (central part of Thuringian Forest), including optional visit of Stasi Bunker Museum at Frauenwald (neighbouring village), coffee or lunch at the historical Rennsteigbahnhof and / or deer-watching (advance reservation required); accommodation in Schmiedefeld (Hotel Gastinger)



Day 4: continue hiking on Rennsteig from Schmiedefeld to Masserberg, 16 km; accommodation in Masserberg. Masserberg is a forest bathing centre

Day 5: continue on Rennsteig from Masserberg, via Rennsteigwarte (viewing tower – spectacular view!) to Neuhaus, ca. 20 km; accommodation in Neuhaus

Day 6: walking to Ernstthal (8-10 km, depending on site of accommodation) and then on Rennsteig ladder Lauscha to Lauscha (2.5 km), visit of ELIAS Farbglashütte (glass manufactory), with large glass shop (including large Christmas area – all year round) and or Lauscha glass museum; back to Neuhaus by regional train; accommodation in Neuhaus

Day 7: end of tour, departure

Highlights along the route include:

- Oberhof sports facilities and thermal spa facility (Oberhof is an Olympic training centre for winter sports, especially biathlon, bob-sleigh and ski jumping); Rennsteig Garden (large alpine botanical garden)
- Großer Beerberg, highest mountain of the region with just under 1,000 metres
- UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Thuringian Forest (core region) with villages Frauenwald and Schmiedefeld, with Stasi Bunker museum and deer-watching (both with advance registration)
- Rennsteigwarte viewing tower, only viewing tower directly at Rennsteig. 150 stairs to indoor viewing platform (glass windows all around)
- Lauscha, historical glassmaking area near Neuhaus (birthplace of Christmas baubles – museums and glass shops)

Rennsteig Ladders



There are 44 so-called “Rennsteig Ladders” (in German: Rennsteigleitern). These are paths leading up to or down from Rennsteig, which are good for shorter half-day or day tours.

Here are three tips:

Rennsteig Ladder Eisenach

3.6 km; signage: yellow capital “R” on white background; level: demanding (route is not barrier-free)

It starts in Eisenach and leads through Dragon Gorge (Drachenschlucht), a rocky gorge and natural monument, which in its narrowest parts is only shoulder wide. The route is partly steep and can be slippery in bad weather or in the cold season. Higher up, the trail passes viewing points, narrow spots, small grottos, and trickling waterfalls.

Tip: Who wants to visit [Wartburg Castle](#) (nearby), can use a sign-posted branch route.

Rennsteig Ladder Oberweißbach

11.8 km; signage yellow capital “R” on white background; level: easy (but not barrier-free)

The start is in Oberweißbach, in Thuringia’s “herb garden”. This is an area where medical herbs grow wild, which formed the basis of the regional economy in the past. Oberweißbach is also the birthplace of the man who invented the concept of “Kindergarten” (Friedrich Fröbel) – the house where he was born is a museum and can be visited. The route branches off after the start: you can choose between a slight uphill path leading you to a viewing tower (great view of the Schwarza river valley) and a more moderate panoramic route, with elements for children (barefoot path, play equipment etc en route). (Depending on the season) You walk through blossoming mountain meadows and can see the wild herbs there.

Tip: [Thuringian mountain railway](#). It includes a steep track (25% ascent) and a straight track on the mountain plateau.

Rennsteig Ladder Lehesten

5.2 km; signage yellow capital “R” on white background; level: medium (but not barrier-free)

The tour starts in Lehesten, a town with a long tradition in slate mining (which is also visible at many houses with slate-covered facades). The route leads past the “Slate Park” – a former mine, now an exhibition ground and museum (showing mining technology and the “slate lake” at a depth of 42 metres below ground and informing about the history of slate mining and the flora and fauna of the region). It also passes the former border area between east and west Germany (“Green Belt”), where you can see remains of old military roads.

OTHER TRAILS

Saale Horizontale



A suggestion for hikers who want to stay closer to a town (and to Thuringia's wine-growing area – starts around Dornburg).

The SaaleHorizontale starts in the town of Jena and leads along sometimes narrower paths in shell limestone mountains to Dornburg, known for its beautiful three palaces, and past historical places linked with the Napoleon history. En route are little village, orchards, blossoming meadows (depending on season of course) and panorama views of the Saale valleys.

The whole route in 6 days

The route is 72 km long and can be done in 4 days.

An easier version can be planned for six days.

Suggested itinerary:

Day 1: travel to Jena, accommodation in Jena

Day 2: Jena - Dornburg, 22 km
In Dornburg: visit of the palaces (or one of them) plus maybe Dornburg Bauhaus Pottery Workshop

Day 3: Dornburg - Loberschütz, 14 km

Day 4: Löberschütz - Wogau, 15 km

Day 5: Wogau - Jena, 22 km
spectacular views en route and partly narrow paths (but still safe)

Day 6: programme in Jena, maybe including Zeiss Planetarium, Schiller House or other

Day 7: departure from Jena

Highlights along the route include:

- Jena, university town, with Zeiss Planetarium, Schiller House, and historical town centre with lots of gastronomy options and shops
- Leutra valley between Jena and Dornburg, known for its wealth in wild orchids, and former Napoleonic battlefields



- Dramatic shell limestone mountains and panoramic views of the Saale river valley
- Dornburg palaces and gardens
- historical Bauhaus pottery workshop (from 1920) in Dornburg

Hainich National Park Routes



The Hainich National Park is part of the UNESCO World Natural Heritage “Ancient Beech Forests of Germany and the Carpathians”. There are various [hiking](#) and [cycling](#) options in the region.

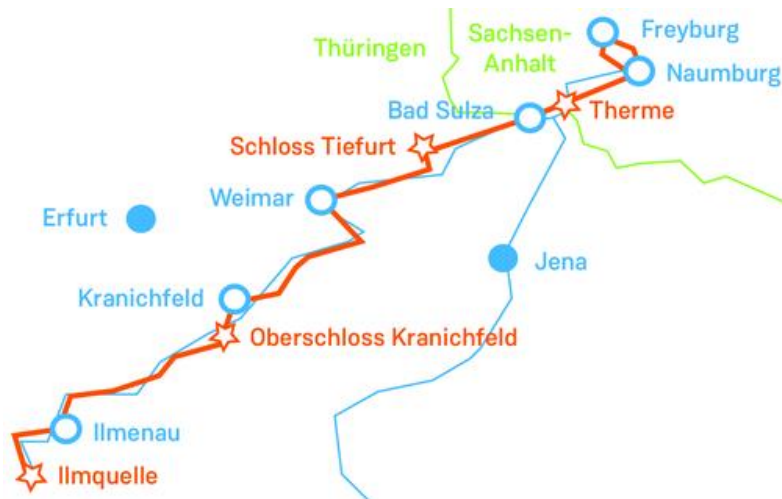
The [treetop trail, or canopy walkway](#), in the National Park Centre is a popular attraction.

Ilm Valley Cycle Path



This is a nice insider tip for cycling fans. The route starts at the Ilm source up in the mountains (Thuringian Forest) near Rennsteig and leads through the rural Weimar county district with its picturesque villages and farmyard shops, through Weimar, with its UNESCO World Heritage sites, and into the wine-area around the Saale-Unstrut rivers. En route, you can find castles, palaces, vineyards, historical mills and manufactories and a lot of nice scenery at the river.

The route is 123 km long and mostly downhill. Depending on how much time you wish to spend on stops at historical places, farmyards, or countryside inns you can calculate 3 or 5 days for the tour. With five days it is more relaxed.



At the end of the tour you can plan an extra 2 days in Bad Sulza. This is the centre of Thuringia's wine area, with thermal spas and nice wine restaurant. There are also dining options at vineyards.

[Description on website](#)

Saale River Cycle Path



The Saale Cycle Path runs over more than 400 km from northern Bavaria through Thuringia and into Saxony-Anhalt. It is one of the prettiest and most varied German cycle paths. It takes you through the wildly romantic Thuringian Slate Mountains with views of fjord-like landscapes, past castles and through the towns of Saalfeld and Jena into the wine-growing region near in northern Thuringia.

Highlights along the route include:

- Bleiloch water reservoir (Europe's largest water reservoir area) with Water Power Museum in Ziegenrück
- Fairy Grottoes in Saalfeld (most colourful exhibition cave in the world according to the Guinness Book of World Records)
- Leuchtenburg Castle with exhibition "The Porcelain Experience" and "Skywalk of Wishes"
- City of Jena, with Zeiss Planetarium
- The three Dornburg Castles among vineyards and with fantastic Saale valley view

[Description on website](#)

FURTHER ROUTE TIPS

For a selection of hiking route tips, you can go to

- [Top 20 Hikes and Walks in Thuringia | Komoot](#)
- [The best Hikes in Thuringia | Outdooractive](#)
- [The 5 most beautiful hiking trails in Thuringia - Discover Germany \(entdecke-deutschland.de\)](#)

You can find cycling route tips on

- [Top 20 Bike Rides and Cycling Routes in Thuringia | Komoot](#)
- [Cycling in Thuringia: the best bike routes | Outdooractive](#)