



The *Decanter* travel guide to

Mosel & Rheingau

FACT FILE

Planted area

Mosel: 9,034 hectares

Rheingau: 3,125ha

Main grape varieties

Mosel: Riesling (60% of plantings) Muller-Thurgau (14%) Spätburgunder (12%)

Rheingau: Riesling (79%) Spätburgunder (12%)

Main soil types Mosel: slate; **Rheingau:** mixed, (slate, quartzite, marls)

Picturesque vistas, quaint villages... these German regions are a must-see all year round, says Rosi Hanson. Until the motorway is built...

WILD BOAR AND deer abound in the Hunsrück hills, just a short drive from the small airport of Frankfurt Hahn and a good spot to start a visit to the vineyards of Germany's Mosel region. Quiet roads wind down thickly wooded slopes past villages where the pace is pleasantly slow. Pretty churches, ruined castles, Roman cellars – and the river Mosel – come into sight. Just 30 minutes after leaving the airport (or five hours' driving from Calais) you are in the midst of vines, unwinding with a glass of Riesling.

'The Mosel is without doubt my favourite place to visit,' says David Motion of The Winery, a London shop with a good selection of German wines. 'It has amazing scenery, great food and outstanding wines. Plus, it's great to walk, cycle or drive around.' With growers pleased to welcome you, a short break here is a fine antidote to the stresses of modern life.

Enjoy it while you can...

The same modern life, however, is now threatening not just the region's charm, but the very livelihood of many growers who are fighting to save their vineyards. The proposed building of a motorway would cut right through through this scenic area and over the Mosel river along which the steep vineyards of the main wine villages are spread out, between Koblenz and Bernkastel. It's a worrying



Top: the villages of the Rhine and Mosel offer quaint charm, but for grander accommodation and dining options, head to the town of Bernkastel. Above: Kesten, home to Weingut Bastgen (see right)

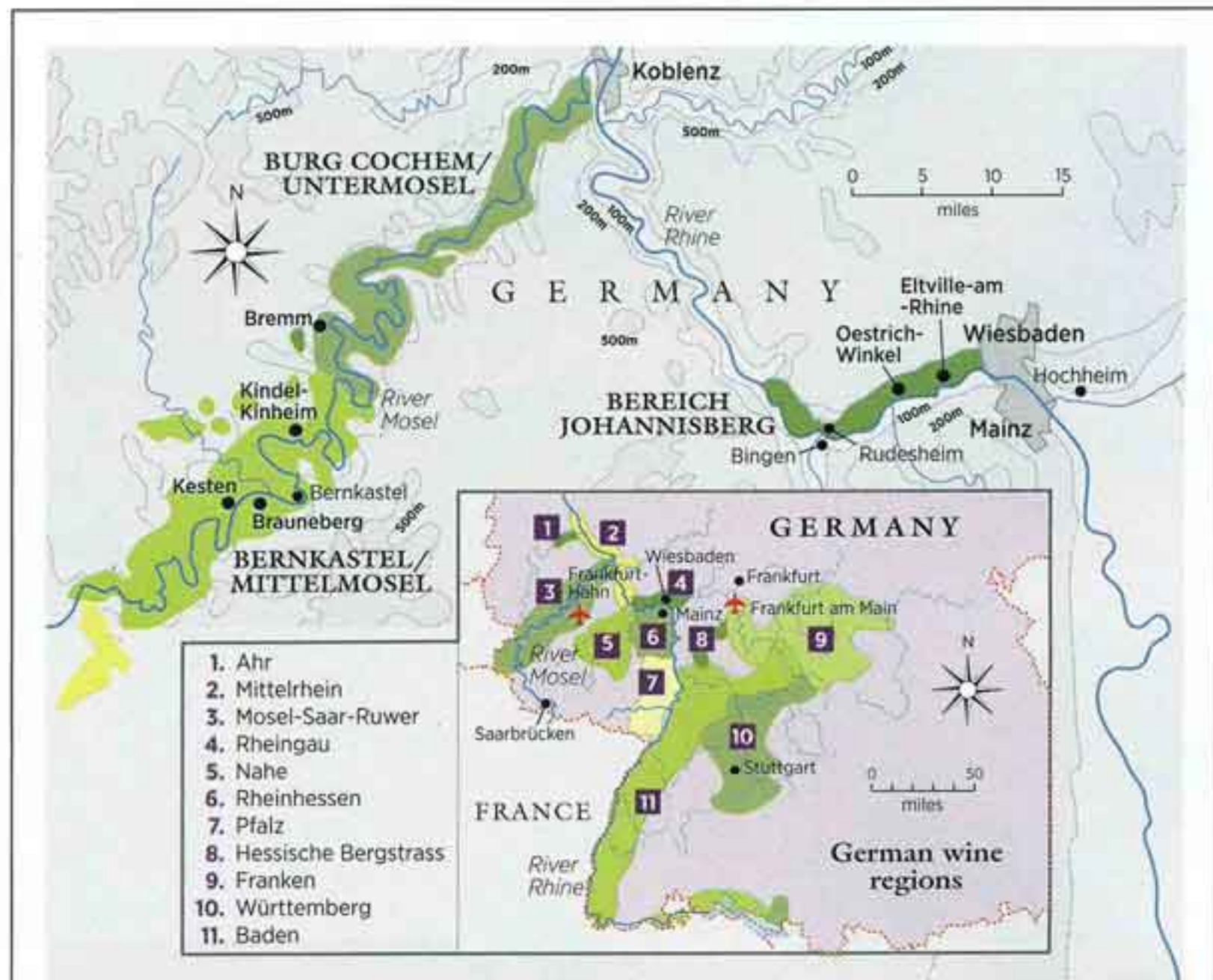
Left: Enjoy the views while you can – the Mosel river’s spectacular panorama of the region’s vineyards is under threat from a proposed motorway

‘The Mosel bends and loops back on itself, giving plenty of photo opportunities’

prospect, and one which has seen a significant protest movement form.

For the moment, though, as the Mosel bends and loops back on itself, it yields plenty of photo opportunities – if making it hard to get a grip on the geography. In many villages there are well-marked hiking and cycling routes by the river, much used by Germans who see this region as a healthy holiday destination. Bikes, easily hired, are a wonderful way to admire the scenery. Pedalling along, as heavily laden barges pass, you get an understanding of the orientation of the vineyards and the variety of soils. It becomes obvious why wines grown so close to each other taste different. And there are plenty of cafés for a light lunch and glass or two from the slopes opposite.

Accommodation in the villages can be modest, but clean and comfortable. For grander style, head



Six of the best vineyards to visit

1 Weingut Bastgen – KESTEN

Armin Vogel and wife Mona have 100-year-old vines in the Paulinshof Berg; they aim to express the ‘endless minerality’ of the terroir. info@weingut-bastgen.de

2 Weingut Martin Conrad – BRAUNEBERG

Since 1558, 14 generations have tended this family’s vineyards. Martin speaks English and his family owns the hotel-restaurant opposite the winery. www.martinconrad.de

3 Rita & Rudi Trossen – KINHEIM-KINDEL

A biodynamic property making quality wine with quirky labels. A member of the anti-bridge movement, Rudi will tell you all about the proposed autoroute threatening the vineyards in the region. www.trossenwein.de

4 Weingut Reinhold Franzen – BREMM

Owners of Europe’s steepest vineyard, Calmont (65°), and of Neefer Frauenberg with views of a ruined convent by a beautiful sweep of the river, as painted by Turner. www.weingut-franzen.de

5 Weingut Asbach-Kretschmar – OESTRICH-WINKEL

Peter and Tania Kreuzberger speak excellent English. Taste their fine, dry Rieslings in a light, airy loft with wooden beams and stone walls dating from 1730. www.asbach-kretschmar.de

6 Kloster Eberbach – ELTVILLE AM RHEIN

Started by Cistercian monks in 1136 and now state-owned, there are vines in 60 appellations. There’s a modern visitors centre to taste and buy the wines. www.weingut-kloster-eberbach.de

● The wines of all six producers are available from The Winery. See p91 for details.

towards bigger centres like Bernkastel. The Moselschild, a family-run inn and restaurant by the river in Urzig in the Middle Mosel, provides a base from which to visit Kesten, Brauneberg and Kinheim-Kindel. While once German food could be heavy, with endless variations on a theme of pork and potatoes, now young chef-owners, such as Oliver Probst at the Moselschild, are using local seasonal produce in a modern style.

When to visit

In spring, the peach trees planted in the vineyards are heavy with blossom, the vines are beginning to shoot and the fresh, pale greens of young leaves in

How to get there

By plane to Mosel: Frankfurt-Hahn airport, flight time 1hr, 30mins from London Stansted. 30 mins drive to the vineyards

Rheingau: Frankfurt airport (NOT the same as Frankfurt-Hahn), flight time 1 hr, 40 mins from London airports. 30 mins drive to the vineyards



Left: autumn is a great time to visit Rheingau vineyards such as these in Oestrich-Winkel. Above: Weingut Martin Conrad and Kloster Eberbach are worth a detour

'A good way to start exploring the Rheingau is to take the car ferry across the majestically wide Rhine river to Rudesheim'

the mixed woods are beautiful. Fat white asparagus, for which the area is famous, is also in season. Summer brings warm weather but is more crowded. When the leaves begin to turn in the autumn, it's time for cep mushrooms and game from the woods, and basking in late September sun. Growers are not too busy to pour their wines and talk, as they wait anxiously to see what conditions the weather brings for the new vintage. By mid-October the harvest may have begun and their time is spent more in the vineyards and less with visitors. Even growers who specialise in dry whites will be picking grapes over many weeks in different stages of development. For the late-picked spätlese, the riper auslese, or fully botrytised beerenauslese and trockenbeerenauslese, the harvest is even more protracted.

It is not easy to make wine here. Montan Union is a group of wineries with the steepest vineyards which give great wines but near-impossible working conditions; unfortunately, accidents – sometimes fatal – happen. Stand at the bottom of the 65° incline of the Calmont vineyard, look up, and you will see why.

Across to the Rheingau

The other key region for top German wines is only a 60km drive away, so it makes sense to visit the two on the same trip. A good way to start exploring the Rheingau is to take the car ferry from Bingen across the majestically wide Rhine river to Rudesheim. The journey gives you a few minutes to appreciate the



view of the vast monument to Germania, Niederwalddenkmal, which can be reached by cable car, and the walled Steinberg vineyard next to Kloster Eberbach winery and historic monastery. The woods here harbour game – and while popular on menus, the deer and boar can cause havoc, damaging the vines and eating grapes as they ripen.

A nice base for visiting villages between Rudesheim and Hochheim is Zum Krug in Eltville, a hotel and restaurant dating from 1720, with a charming, wood-panelled dining room, good food and a comprehensive wine list.

In the Mosel and the Rheingau, wineries are often small family businesses. A large proportion of their sales are to private clients who come and taste before they buy. Some have purpose-built tasting rooms, others use a room in their home so you may meet several members of the family. The atmosphere is friendly and informal. If you ask to taste dry Rieslings, you may find that you are also offered Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir, tasting very different, grown here on slate), or sweet, aromatic late-harvest wines already open in the fridge. It's hard to refuse...

Left: these ruins in Bremm were painted by Turner

Rosi Hanson is a freelance food and wine writer



Above: visit the Mosel region in spring to enjoy white asparagus at its best. Where once German food could be heavy, the new generation of chef-owners are using seasonal, local produce in a modern style

Mosel & Rheingau

WHERE TO STAY, SHOP, EAT AND RELAX

Pretty riverside towns, charming hotels and modern cuisine

HOTELS & RESTAURANTS

Weinhaus Moselschild Urzig



Simple, pleasant, family-run hotel and restaurant. Sit on the terrace, where you can sip a local Riesling and watch the barges go by on the river. Later, enjoy modern German food in a light-filled dining room. www.moselschild.de

Becker's

Trier is the place for Roman remains, and the smart, modern Becker's Hotel Restaurant www.beckers-trier.de

Hotel Bellevue

In Traben-Trarbach, this Jugendstil (Art Nouveau) hotel has a good restaurant with rich cuisine to match the building. Good wine list too. www.bellevue-hotel.de

Brauneberger Hof

Near Bernkastel, the Brauneberger Hof hotel serves pleasant local food and wine, and offers a friendly welcome from the Conrad family.

Opposite is their winery, run by son Martin, so allow time for a tasting. www.mosel-erlebnis.de

Schloss Reinhartshausen

For a fancy hotel in the Rheingau, visit Schloss Reinhartshausen in Erbach/Eltville, grand and stylish. www.schloss-reinhartshausen.de

Weinhaus & Hotel Zum Krug



This small hotel in Eltville has a wood panelled dining room, where you can enjoy good food. The wine list reflects the owner's knowledge of local wines. The building has a charming exterior decorated in old, typical German style. www.hotel-zum-krug.de

Die Wirtschaft in Oestrich-Winkel



– Beate and Florian Kreller's restaurant is loved by winemakers for good rustic soups, stews and sausages: hearty but not heavy. In good weather the courtyard outside is well used; in bad it is cosy inside. www.die-wirtschaft.net

SHOPS

Hotel und Weinhaus Porn

Bernkastel is a pretty riverside

town, somewhat touristy but definitely worth visiting. It has the excellent, if unbelievably named, 'Hotel und Weinhaus Porn' at 11 Hebegasse – a wine shop with a great range of classic Mosels, dry and sweet. For maps and guides, look in the tourist section of the Buchhandlung Engel at 36 Markt.

Metzgerei Georg

Lovers of hearty German fare should make a beeline for this fantastic butcher in Enkirch – check out the outstanding Schlachtwurst (Blood pudding and liver sausage) www.georg-metzgerei.de

TOURIST TRAIL

Kloster Eberbach



A monastery and abbey complex with cloisters, Romanesque refectory and kitchen. It is a remarkable collection of buildings, run by a charitable foundation. Kloster Eberbach winery and visitor centre is next door. www.klostereberbach.de

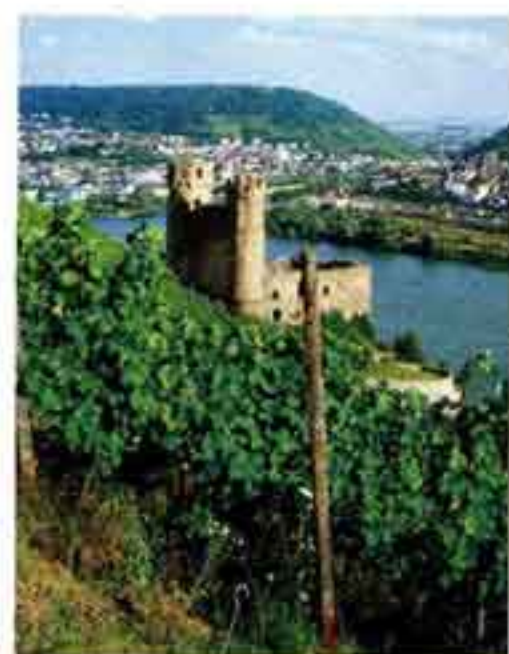
Laacher See (Laach Lake)

For a beautiful walk, take the cable car up from Rudesheim to Germania (Niederwalddenkmal), follow the signs through the forest to Assmannshausen and walk back through the vines.

Maria Laach

Visit this lake in the crater of an old volcano, and park, with nearby Romanesque church, in the Eifel just to the north of the Mosel.

For more information, visit: www.germany-tourism.co.uk



Above: Rudesheim village makes sense to start a tour of Rheingau
Below: the cable car from Rudesheim to Germania yields views of Laacher See

