



Wish you were here

Fact file

Moselland Tourism cycling tour packages include accommodation, baggage transfers and bike rental. See [www.mosellandtouristik.de](http://www.mosellandtouristik.de)

A four-day package costs about \$550 a person.

It's also easy as a DIY trip. Reserve a rental bike and book your own accommodation for one night each in Trier and Koblenz and three nights along the Mosel. The bike rental people will collect your bike from your accommodation in Koblenz at trip's end (Bicycle Station "Radstation" Trier Hauptbahnhof, ph +49 651 148856, 9am-7pm).

The towns of Trittenheim, Cochem, Traben-Trarbach, Bernkastel-Kues and Zell have plenty of guesthouse accommodation and all are handily positioned along the river. Also recommended are Kemmer's Panorama Hotel in Graach-Schäferrei if you're up for the hill climb ([www.mosel-panorama-hotel.de](http://www.mosel-panorama-hotel.de)) and Hotel Schützen in Senheim ([www.schuetzen-stock.de](http://www.schuetzen-stock.de)), which has friendly owners and a family winery. About 50km of cycling a day equates to around three hours' relaxed pedalling (the riverside trail is entirely flat), which leaves lots of time for side trips to castles and along river tributaries, and for picnic lunches and wine tasting. Bikes can be taken on all Mosel trains and ferries.

Essentials

Cycling shorts, rain-proof jacket, sunscreen, a copy of the Mosel River Trail cycling guide, plastic wine goblets. A helmet is a good idea but not compulsory. With the exception of perhaps 10km of road, you're on a dedicated cycling path the entire way.

Then, for 15km starting at the village of Zell, the cycle path deteriorates for the first time, the smooth asphalt giving way to buckled slabs of concrete as it snakes through a string of uninspiring caravan parks towards Ediger-Eller and on to Senheim.

Beyond Senheim, order is restored however, as first the fairytale village of Beilstein – with its much-filmed and photographed castle – comes into view, followed by the bustling town of Cochem. Cafes, restaurants serving six kinds of schnitzel and bakeries bulging with cake and strudel make Cochem

an essential stop for an hour or two's indulgence.

It's also where I decide to let the river do the work for a while as, provisioned with an ice cream and a piece of what turns out to be the world's best apple strudel, I trundle the bike on to a ferry and relax in the sun for 17km down to Treis-Karden.

With only an afternoon to go before journey's end, I'm in no hurry to get to Koblenz and almost every castle, bridge and landmark seems worth a detour.

The hulking edifices of Burg Eltz and Burg Thurant are just a few

kilometres apart and tied for the title Most Impressive Castle on the Mosel.

I nearly pedal straight through tiny Koblenz, noticing just in time its village wine museum.

The last winery town before Koblenz is Winningen, where I resolve to stop at one more cellar door.

There has been a festival on all weekend and several wineries have outdoor bars and barbecues going, so I park the bike and sidle up to one.

The moment I ask for a glass of auslese in my appalling German, Elfi and Sasha, a pair of newlywed

revellers, pick up that I'm from out of town and insist I undergo a comprehensive introduction to the wines of Winningen.

Two things quickly become clear: I'm no chance of paying for a drink, and I might not make it to Koblenz.

Just when a moment arises in which I might graciously make good my escape, Elfi asks whether I've tried any of the Mosel reds. I'd not even considered them until now, white wines being what the region is famous for, so Elfi whistles up a glass of something called spätburgunder.

It turns out the Mosel's shale slopes are also ideal for growing pinot noir, a personal favourite that's marketed here as spätburgunder and presently swirling about under my nose.

Finally, about 9pm, Koblenz comes into view and, 10 minutes later, I'm ensconced in my hotel room.

In my journal there's a note to myself that the only folk who might not find their bliss travelling the Mosel route could be die-hard red drinkers marooned in Germany's land of white.

My belated discovery puts a tick in every single box.



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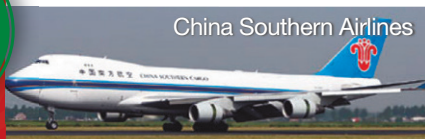
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