

A Tale Trail - tracing fairytales through Germany

Introduction

The Germanic landscape is integral to the legendary stories of the brothers Grimm, gathered as they were directly from peasants who were esteemed by the Romantics for being close to nature and God. What better way to relive those stories and contribute to their longevity than following a trail through the land which inspired their creation!

In addition to entertainment and morality, the Grimm brothers (Jacob and Wilhelm) intended to represent what they deemed fundamental elements of German culture and thereby preserve national identity. As men who were highly focused on and fascinated by words, they were more interested in the language used in the tales than the storylines themselves, wanting to establish and record a uniquely Germanic register. The brothers created their own dictionary in 1854 - the *Deutsches Wörterbuch* which became, and still remains, the largest German language dictionary in existence - while in *Deutsche Grammatik*, published in 1822, Jacob Grimm formulated a grammatical rule, termed 'Grimm's Law', concerning a linguistic sound change. Compiling fairy tales gave the brothers the perfect opportunity to explore the connection between how the German language worked and how German society was organised. Professor Steffen Martus, a German literary scholar and current Professor of Modern German Literature at Humboldt University in Berlin, has observed that "the Grimms were saying that, just as language has its own internal form and logic, so do societies and communities."

With this guide, we will travel both backwards and forwards - we will return to the place of the stories' origin and in doing so, continue the process of storytelling, passing on the tales and our experiences in the places which inspired them.

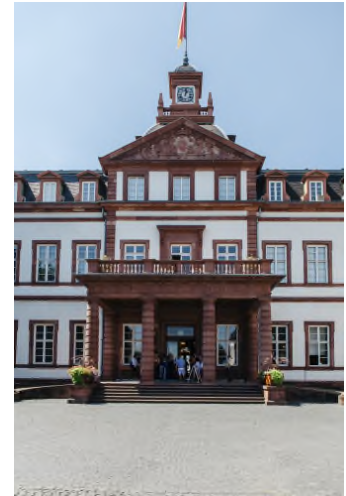
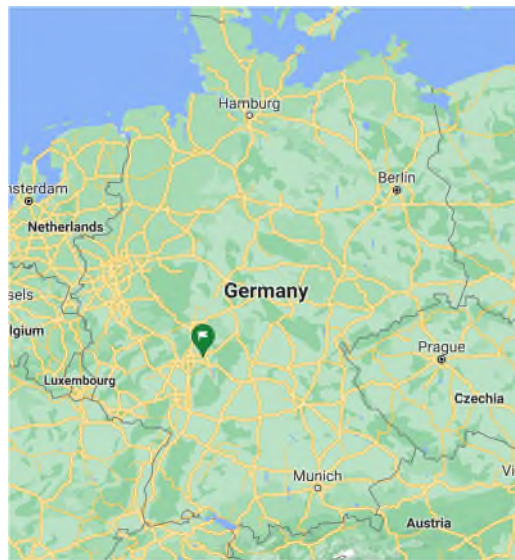


Without more ado, let the trail commence!

1. HANAU

As do all good fairytales, we're going to begin with a once upon a time. This story starts in a town named Hanau towards the end of the 18th century. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm were the

eldest of five children, born here to Philipp and Dorothea Grimm in 1785 and 1786 respectively. This makes Hanau the perfect start to our fairytale route.



Top sights:

1. The Grimm memorial in Hanau's marketplace has been paying homage to the brothers since 1896. Considered a national monument, the bronze statue is surrounded by the buzz, smells and colours of market stalls today as it has been since its creation. This timeless spot is sure to take you back in time to where it all began. (Visit Hanau in winter and you'll see Germany's iconic Weihnachtsmärkte at the foot of the Grimm monument).
2. If you visit Hanau between May and June you'll experience the famous fairytale festival. Fairytales are performed outside every day by performers in colourful costumes.
3. Visit the baroque Philippsruhe Castle for an enchanting day on the banks of the Main. The GrimmsMärchenReich - Germany's first interactive museum about the brothers Grimm - can be found in the right wing. Discover costumes, fairytale landscapes and audio stations as you walk through the whispering corridor. You'll see the Hanau of the Grimms' childhood and make sure to look out for unique pieces, such as Jacob Grimm's frock coat and briefcase and a draft of the national monument of the brothers from the Hanauer Geschichtsverein 1844. Built in 1700, the castle is also home to a historical museum which will transport you back to the time of the Grimm Brothers' childhood and beyond!

Practical tips:

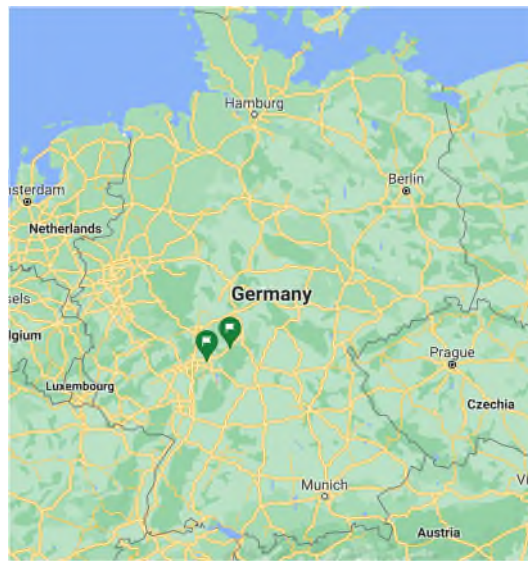
- Hanau's closest airport is in Frankfurt, just a 30 minute train ride away.

2. STEINAU AN DER STRASSE

After Hanau, Steinau an der Straße is the only other stop on our tour which can officially bear the title 'Brothers Grimm Town', for it was here where the brothers lived as children. The Grimm family home - formerly a magistrate's house - now stands as a museum showcasing the life, works and stories of the brothers. Just 50 kilometres north-east of Hanau, this next leg

of the journey begins our northwards route up the centre of Germany. Extracts from the Grimms' autobiographies fond memories of growing up in Steinau.

describe the brothers'



Top sights:

1. Not to be missed is the Brothers Grimm House Museum. The former office building is a magnificent half-timbered house, set in a picturesque courtyard. Standing as a museum since 1998, it contains modern, interactive exhibits to depict the young life of the two brothers and their later work. A separate room is dedicated to the artistic work of their youngest brother, Ludwig Emil Grimm, who was a well-known Romantic painter.
2. Fairytale Fountain: as fairytale monuments go, this one certainly boasts figures from the most diverse range of stories. Created for the 200th birthday of the brothers Grimm by the Würzburg sculptor, W. Finger-Rokitnitz, the fountain takes pride of place in the town's market square. Fairytale images are laid in relief around the protruding sandstone column with other characters surrounding it in statue form - look out for the frog prince, a dragon spouting water and a princess and marvel at the Sleeping Beauty castle adorning the top of the fountain.
3. Schloss Steinau Castle combines a medieval castle with a renaissance fortress and palace. Explore the Grimm exhibition in the museum then climb the castle tower for a panoramic view of Steinau and the King valley.

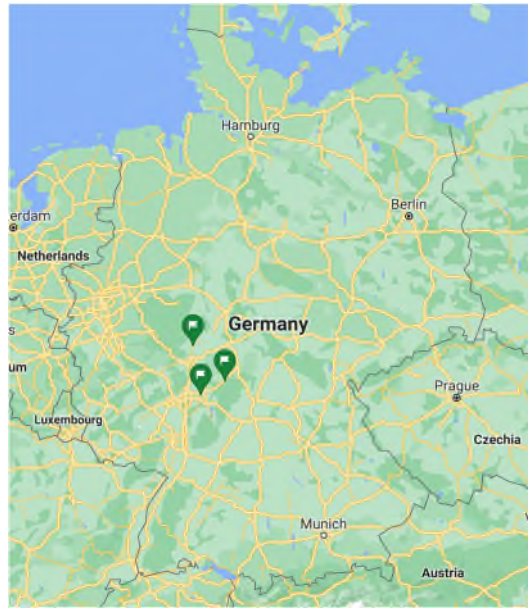
Practical tips

- If staying in Frankfurt, catch a regional train to Stein which runs every hour.
- Schloss Steinau is closed on Mondays.

3. MARBURG

Jacob and Wilhelm are two of the most famous alumni of Marburg university. The medieval flair, half timbered houses, narrow streets and impressive landmarks such as the Elisabeth Church and Landgrave Palace inspired the two students to pursue their idea of creating their collection of fairytales. It was here they began researching folk literature and joined a circle of romantics. The enchanting countryside also inspired Marburg painter, Otto Ubbelohde's

(1867-1922) illustrations of the tales. His former studio can now be visited and hosts exhibitions of the artist's work.



Top sights:

1. Marburg's 'Grimm Path' is a trail of fairytale figures, perched atop houses, stairs and walls throughout the city. Follow it all the way up to the castle in the old town and see how many characters you can spot.
2. Visit Marburg university - the world's first protestant university, founded in 1527 by Landgrave Philipp. The brothers were students here between 1802 and 1806.
3. Not to be missed is a visit to the Marburg Landgrave Palace - since 1981 the palace has been developing as a museum, offering visitors a cultural and historical education about the city's past.
4. If you have time to spare, a trip into the Marburg countryside is well worth it to see the landscape which inspired Ubbelohde's Grimm story illustrations. His house and studio in Lahntal-Goßfelden can be visited!
5. An hour from Kassel is the town of Alsfeld, home to what's known as the 'Fairytale House'. Discover Grimm fairytales on both floors of this charming museum and listen to them read aloud in the narrative room.

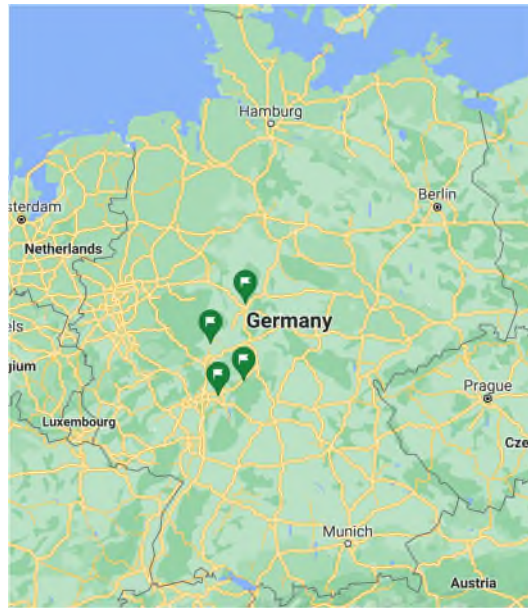
Practical tips:

- Bus number 10 from the town centre will take you to Marburg Palace. Like Schloss Steinau, it's closed on Mondays.

4. KASSEL

Kassel can be called the capital of this fairytale trail, for it is here where the original copy of the Grimms' *Children's and Household Tales* can be found, complete with pencilled notes in the margins. The collection was added to the UNESCO World Document Heritage List in 2005. As teenagers, the two brothers worked in Kassel as librarians for the King of Westphalia and the

city is now home GRIMM WORLD, an immersive, artistic and interactive space exploring the Grimm tales.



Top sights:

1. UNESCO World Heritage Bergpark Wilhelmshöhe: Construction of this mountain park began in 1689 and took over 150 years. It now stands as the largest hillside park in Europe and it's easy to see how it inspired the brothers during their lifetime. Take a stroll in front of fairytale backdrops and look up to the giant Hercules statue, symbol of Kassel, which towers above the city.
2. GRIMM WORLD in Kassel is not to be missed! This epic new museum transports the Grimm fairytales into the modern era. See for yourself the original collection of the tales, explore 25 exhibition spaces (literary, cultural and historical exhibits) and see modern artists' interpretations of the stories in artistic form. If travelling with children, a treasure hunt and quiz about the Grimm fairytales is available.
3. If you haven't had enough castles yet, head to Schloss Wilhelmshöhe, a neoclassical palace used by Emperor Wilhelm II as a summer retreat. The palace now houses an art gallery including one of the world's largest Rembrandt collections.
4. A Brothers Grimm Festival takes place here in the summer with open-air concerts, puppet shows and plays! It's popular so make sure to buy tickets in advance.

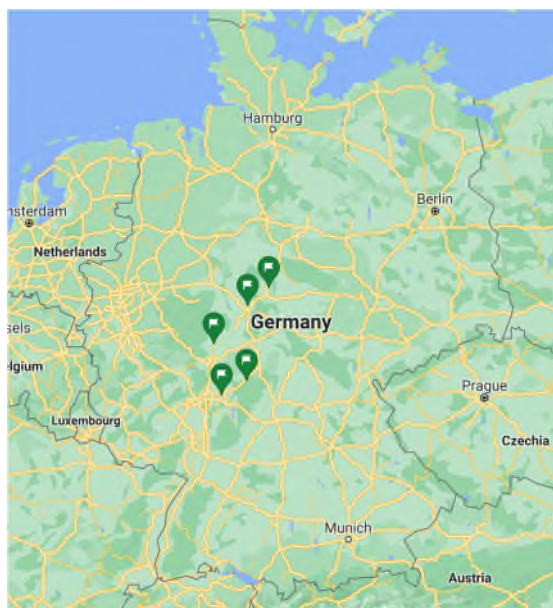
Practical tips

- If travelling by train, take the Regio30 from Marburg to Kassel. It's only an hour and will drop you right in the centre.

5. GÖTTINGEN

From 1829 to 1837 both Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm taught at Göttingen university. It was also here where they completed several famous publications, notably two editions of their famous

'Deutsche Grammatik' as well as the third edition of their fairytale collection. The Gänseliesel (goose girl) statue in the city's most famous front of the town hall is landmark.



Top sights:

1. The goose girl statue, from the eponymous fairytale, is considered to be the most kissed girl in the world, so you may have to fight your way through the crowds! Situated on the market square fountain since 1901, the statue depicts a girl tending her geese - a humble image which has become the university's mascot and lucky charm; as the tradition goes, students give her a kiss after passing an exam.
2. 'Rund ums Gänseliesel' (Around Goose girl) is a public sightseeing tour which takes place from April to October, every first and third Saturday of the month. Starting in the town hall, you'll be shown around the town and university by a local guide.
3. 30 minutes (by car) from Göttingen is the Wesertal region, made up of six villages through which the river Weser runs. The area was of great inspiration to the brothers and now boasts various figures, reliefs and statues of characters from the tales. Look out for Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs carved in stone in front of the town hall in Gieselwerder and let Puss in Boots welcome you into the car park in Ödelsheim village.

Practical tips:

- A trip to Wesertal is definitely worth it but accommodation is thin on the ground so using Göttingen as a base is to be advised.

6. HAMELN

Hameln is the city of the Pied Piper - the tale's place of origin and the place where the tragic exodus of children allegedly took place in 1284. Hameln's old town has been beautifully restored, making it an inspiring stop on the trail, whether or not you believe it to have been home to the most famous



of all flautists!

Top sights:

1. The Pied Piper's house (Rattenfängerhaus) is a stunning half-timbered building in the centre of Hameln. It got its name from an inscription on the side of the house which purports to be an eyewitness account of the exodus event of the Pied Piper story.
2. If this is your favourite of the tales, Hameln is sure to please! In addition to the house, the town is also home to two Pied Piper fountains. The first, located in Osterstraße, was a gift to the town from the publishing firm, C.W. Niemeyer GmbH & Co. KG on the occasion of its 200th birthday in 1998. The second, larger fountain in front of Hameln's town hall, depicts the children's exodus.
3. Located in the middle of the beautiful Weserberg countryside, Hameln is a great starting point for walks, hikes and bike rides. The surrounding nature takes on a new meaning when you know the extent to which the Grimm Brothers valued and were inspired by Germany's forests. It's probably wise to avoid the most densely wooded areas after reading Little Red Riding Hood however - the distinction between imagination and reality begins to blur when wolves are involved...

Practical tips:

- About an hour from Göttingen and 50 minutes from Hameln, Hannover would be a good place to stay whilst visiting these two points on the fairytale trail. A direct, hour long train will then take you to the final stop, Bremen.

7. BREMEN

To end on a high, travel north-west from Hameln to beautiful Bremen. Hometown to the world famous story 'Bremen Town Musicians', reminders of the Grimms' work are to be seen in multiple places, starting with the most famous - a bronze statue depicting the musicians at the west side of the Town Hall. A metropolis bursting with history, innovation and tradition,

Bremen is the culmination of this Tale Trail's aim - to unite Germany's past and future through the magical me-



dium of fairytales!

Top sights:

1. In addition to the town hall's bronze monument, the Bremen Town Musicians are also to be admired in Böttcherstraße alley where they adorn a fountain. According to the tale's story, donkeys, dogs, cats and roosters once went to this city in search of a better life.
2. If you can't get enough of Bremen's history from its array of museums, step out into the street on Sunday at noon for a free, live, open-air recount of its past.
3. Schnoorviertel is Bremen's oldest area - a perfect place for a cozy cafe break, it's also home to the Bremer Geschichtenhaus, a living history museum where costumed actors tell the Bremen's story from the 1600s to the early 1900s.

Practical Tips:

- Guided tours of Böttcherstraße - Bremen's secret main street - are available on Sundays at 11am.
- Once you've concluded the trail, Bremen's airport will fly you home. Located just 3.5 kilometres south of the city, it's a 20 minute journey on tram number 6.

Aufwiedersehen!

And with that, the fairytale trail comes to a close. But rather than an end, in fact it is just the beginning of yet another step in the immortalisation of these legendary stories. The Grimms' collection contains 210 tales, collected from the people and landscapes of their lives. This huge number is not only an excuse to keep travelling around Germany forever, but also means that there are stories applicable to a plethora of circumstances and characters who relate to us all - if there was a travel guide or holiday plan to please everyone, then this is it!

Just as Jacob Grimm said “How often when we are comfortable, we begin to long for something new”, if you’re looking for a travel idea after months of severe lockdown, take this as



your sign to book that flight to Hanau!

