

Background information on the German Fairy Tale Route as a holiday route, network and brand



Introduction

Since its **founding** in 1975, the German Fairy Tale Route has rapidly become one of the few German holiday routes that are actually known worldwide and attract guests from all over the world. This success is rooted in the well-known **Children's and Household Tales compiled by the Brothers Grimm**. For more than two hundred years, these stories have fascinated people all over the world and of all ages, creating in their minds a romantic image of Germany, characterised by castles and palaces, half-timbered houses and dense forests.

The **success** is not measurable in the strictest sense. But it is exemplarily visible in the "European Chinese Tourists Welcoming Award" presented in 2006, in the fact that it has been ranked among the "TOP 100 Sights of Germany" five times so far, in countless press publications with headlines such as "Germany's Dream Routes" (HÖRZU, May 26, 2017), or in the fact that at least 80 tour operators offer trips along the German Fairy Tale Route.

This also shows that the German Fairy Tale Route is not "just" a holiday route; it is also a network and brand of its own.

The German Fairy Tale Route is supported and designed in the three dimensions mentioned by the registered association of the same name; operational control and day-to-day business are the responsibility of the full-time office.

The route

The German Fairy Tale Route begins in the Brothers Grimm town of Hanau, the birthplace of the Brothers Grimm. Its official starting point is at the imposing monument dedicated to Jacob and Wilhelm on the Neustadt market square.

From there, the unique route leads through five more stations in the lives of the famous brothers and more than fifty fairytale and legendary places to Bremen. Here, the sculpture of the Bremen Town Musicians in front of the Ratskeller symbolizes the end of the journey. Until there and on a final detour to Buxtehude, it leads through different natural and cultural landscapes, remote villages, cosy half-timbered towns, urban cultural centres, and through the GrimmHeimat NordHessen. Castles steeped in history and fairytale palaces, enchanted forests and the famous Weser River, mystical places of legend and countless fairytale fountains line the way.

The course of the route has changed over the decades due to various factors, such as new memberships and road construction. In 2019 it was reviewed in detail and redefined; since then the route is also available digitally using the link: www.ferienstrassen.info/deutsche-märchenstraße/

There is currently no continuous signage along the route.

The Deutsche Märchenstraße e.V. (German Fairy Tale Route Association)

The association is the organisational and supporting part of the network German Fairy Tale Route. It was founded on January 1, 2007, as an independent legal entity in succession to the unregistered working group "Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutsche Märchenstraße".

At the same time, a good 30 years after the birth of the German Fairy Tale Route, a dedicated separate office was set up for the first time. Its equipment and ability to work is guaranteed to a considerable extent by the "sponsoring municipalities" of the city and district of Kassel and the city of Hofgeismar.

On the day of its foundation, the association had 41 **members**; now there are about 70 cities, municipalities and other municipal bodies that jointly support the association; more than 60 are also stations along the route that shape the project and its profile.

In terms of content and organisation, the range of members is supplemented by **partners** in the hotel and gastronomy sectors as well as leisure and cultural institutions. Bilateral "contracts for a marketing-oriented partnership" have been and continue to be concluded with selected companies and initiatives that are also committed in the spirit of the German Fairy Tale Route. Currently, eight high-class hotels are "premium partners" to market offers for discerning travellers - especially from overseas - in exclusive cooperation.

The General Meeting elects a six-member **Board** every two years; the chairman - currently Andreas Siebert, District Administrator of Kassel - and the deputies are provided by the sponsoring municipalities. The Board and the office are advised by the **Marketing Committee** of up to ten members, which is also elected every two years by the General Meeting.

Idea and objectives

The **story** of the German Fairy Tale Route begins almost fifty years ago, strangely enough in Russia. Our then chairman, at that time the district administrator of Kassel, was visiting an important large library in Leningrad, where he noticed that the fairy tales collected by the Brothers Grimm were exhibited in almost all languages of the world, a sure sign that the Brothers Grimm were globally known.

As a consequence, two years later the German Fairy Tale Route was founded in 1975. Much has changed since then. But one thing has always been and remains the purpose and concern of the German Fairy Tale Route: a hearty **invitation to people from all over the world** to follow in the footsteps of the Brothers Grimm from Hanau to Bremen and immerse themselves in the dazzling worlds of German fairy tales, sagas and legends.

The statutes of the association differentiate this fundamental concern under two aspects, simultaneously making it clear that by no means the least objective is to achieve added value in the tourism trade.

*The Deutsche Märchenstraße e. V. association **serves to***

- *contribute to the preservation as well as exploit the rich cultural heritage of German fairy tales, sagas and legends and the cultural heritage of the Brothers Grimm, and*

- *to sustainably position the German Fairy Tale Route as a cultural tourism quality brand and one of the most important holiday routes. (Statutes § 2,1)*

As part of a comprehensive process to further concentrate the German Fairy Tale Route brand, objectives and self-image have recently been updated and specified in the following **vision**:

"The German Fairy Tale Route is a dynamic and professionally coordinated network of places and players that enrich, help shape and benefit from the German Fairy Tale Route. In the preparation of the Grimm fairy tales and legends for tourism, the German Fairy Tale Route assumes the leading position and is permanently among the top 3 holiday routes in Germany.

For its guests, the German Fairy Tale Route offers a year-round experience of fairytale themes through value-conforming, unique offerings for individual travellers and groups."

Interim balance and perspectives

On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the company's foundation in 2025, there is no doubt that the interim results are very positive. In addition to the indicators mentioned in the introduction, the positive membership development since the association was founded and the numerous brochure and travel enquiries from all over the world, various publications illustrate that the German Fairy Tale Route fulfils the statutory purpose (see above) of positioning itself as one of the most important holiday routes: "Die schönsten Straßen der Welt" [The Most Beautiful Routes in the World] (uptrend Magazine, 10-2019), "Auf Deutschlands schönsten Ferienstraßen" [Following Germany's Most Beautiful Holiday Routes" (tz.de, 05-2020) or "33 Traumstraßen" [33 Dream Routes] (Polyglott 2024).

In 2025, a separate family travel guide to the German Fairy Tale Route will be published in the "DuMont Escapades" series. The guide is a recognition of the brand and valuable offerings of the German Fairy Tale Route, while simultaneously helping to strengthen them.

However, it has become particularly clear since the corona pandemic that growth over the last fifteen or twenty years could not be taken for granted - success has to be earned again and again, especially because the general conditions and expectations of the various markets are constantly changing. With this in mind, social media activities have been expanded from Facebook to YouTube and Instagram in recent years; the development of a "Fairy Tale Route App" was commissioned - with funding from the city of Kassel; a long-term, highly successful cooperation agreement was concluded with "meinPLATZ" for the motorhome tourism sub-market.

Motivated by recurring specific requests and the results of cycle tour analyses, we have also developed the German Fairy Tale Route cycle route over the last four years. It connects the stations of the German Fairy Tale Route on existing cycle paths. The route is described on our website (including download track) and in a separate "Bikeline Guide".

The most important work objectives for the next few years include continuous signage of the cycle route and increasing the visibility of the German Fairy Tale Route locally. The feasibility of further projects that appear sensible and promising in the medium term will be clarified step by step, taking into account the limited resources available. Examples include a comprehensive relaunch of the website, particularly for technical reasons, the systematic

processing of the cultural mission intended by the purpose of the statutes (see above) and the development of a convincing merchandising strategy.

But first and foremost, it is about preparing and organising a multifaceted, fairytale anniversary year to mark the fiftieth birthday of the German Fairy Tale Route on April 11, 2025. From April 2025 to spring 2026, there will be numerous events and offers along the route to mark this major anniversary. A colourful festival weekend at Sababurg Zoo is being planned for **16 and 17 August 2025**, and a two-day diverse programme for all the senses will be offered at the foot of Sababurg Sleeping Beauty Castle.

Invitation

If you would like to learn more or contribute your ideas, please feel free to contact us:

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