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2024 will be the year of Romanticism in MV: Caspar David Friedrich's 250th birthday

Boost for cultural tourism expected for the northeast

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Tourist Board

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Painter, draftsman and graphic artist Caspar David Friedrich would have turned 250 on 5 September 2024. To mark the occasion, next year's birthday program in the regions of the state where he worked and in his native city of Greifswald will be far more lavish than usual. More than 160 events are planned in the Hanseatic city of Greifswald alone. In addition, events will also take place in the regions where Caspar David Friedrich found inspiration, among them the Isle of Rügen and the Western Pomeranian mainland. Tobias Voitendorf, the state tourism commissioner and managing director of the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Tourism Association, says: "Caspar David Friedrich's work continues to fascinate to date and inspires contemporary artists. Since his work enjoys fame far beyond the state's borders, the anniversary year will give a boost to cultural tourism."

In this context, Voitendorf pointed out that according to the "GfK DestinationMonitor" study 45 percent of all vacation trips to Mecklenburg-Vorpommern last year had cultural occasions or activities. This would correspond to around 2.2 million vacation trips in 2022, an increase of 8 percentage points compared to 2021. In addition he said that the international "Travel Summit" format to be held by the German National Tourist Board from 24 to 28 September this year with about 80 international tour operators in the Hanseatic cities of Stralsund and Greifswald, on the islands of Rügen and Usedom, and in the region of Western Pomerania, will also be used to promote the anniversary year and to showcase above all the places where Friedrich worked.

Under www.auf-nach-mv.de/kunst/romantik all events regarding the topic of Caspar David Friedrich in the northeast will be available before the start of the anniversary year. The anniversary meetings in

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Greifswald are already obtainable under caspardavid250.de.

Further information under: www.auf-nach-mv.de/kunst/romantik

Highlights of the Year of Romanticism in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern include:

Opening concert at St. Nikolai Cathedral on 20 January

A ceremonial opening including a concert attended by Claudia Roth, Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, will herald the start of the anniversary year on 20 January 2024. Moreover, the journalist and art historian Florian Illies will give a speech. The event will be musically accompanied by the internationally renowned electro musician Christian Löffler playing a concert with a light show specially designed for the cathedral.

Cathedral romantically!

As part of the "Cathedral romantically!" initiative, the parish of St. Nikolai has succeeded in bringing a world star to Greifswald. Ólafur Elíasson is considered one of the most famous contemporary artists. The redesign of the east window group is based on Friedrich's work "Hutten's Grave" and will immerse the cathedral in the jubilarian's colour and light spectra. Construction work will start as early as this year - the window group will be ceremoniously inaugurated in a church service on 7 April 2024.

Pomeranian State Museum with extensive anniversary offer

All good things come in threes: There will be three special exhibitions at the Pomeranian State Museum. The first entitled "**Caspar David Friedrich. Lifelines. A Walking Tour in Drawings & Paintings**" will be presented from 28 April to 4 August 2024. It is going to show the extensive Friedrich collection consisting of six paintings, more than 60 drawings and prints as well as numerous letters, for the first time almost complete, supplemented with loans. In this way, Friedrich's "lifelines" are traced from his first attempts at drawing to his late painterly work. Thereafter the exhibition "**Caspar David Friedrich. Places of Longing**" is shown featuring a star guest: his main work "Chalk Cliffs on Rügen" will be shown from 18 August to 6 October 2024. The icon otherwise exhibited in Winterthur, Switzerland, can be marvelled at for seven weeks and for the first time ever in Friedrich's home region. In addition, other masterpieces including "The Port of

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Greifswald" and "The Ruins of Eldena Abbey in the Giant Mountains" will be on display, augmented by a Friedrich tribute by photographer Volkmar Herre.

"Caspar David Friedrich. Hometown" is the third exhibition in the round of special shows and can be seen from 16 October 2024 to 5 January 2025. The jewel in this crown is the work "Meadows near Greifswald," on loan from Hamburger Kunsthalle.

"250 Steps to Caspar David Friedrich. Trail of Romanticism & Hiking Workshop" is the title of another offer at the Pomeranian State Museum available from March to December 2024. Inspired by Friedrich's wanderings, a walking route leads from the forecourt through the museum to the art. Along the way, there will be an installation of the fabled blue flower, a treadmill to take own walks, and a time box taking visitors back to 1818. Last but not least, a cabinet exhibition with digital collages by Japanese artist Hiroyuki Masuyama will draw a line to the present and bring Friedrich's wanderings into contemporary contexts starting in July 2024.

Further information under: www.pommersches-landesmuseum.de/friedrich2024

Caspar David Friedrich asks for a tour: Greifswald Information offers tours with costumed city guides

In the anniversary year, Greifswald Information offers guided city tours for groups of ten or more and for individual travellers with costumed guides in the guise of Friedrich. Group tours start all year round on Tuesdays to Sundays and last about 1.5 hours. They lead along the Caspar David Friedrich picture path via the Caspar David Friedrich Centre and to the Pomeranian State Museum. Additionally, there will be guided tours for individual travellers starting every Thursday at 11am from April to October. In the off-peak season, from January to March and October to December, these tours will be available every second and fourth Thursday a month. All tours include admission to the Pomeranian State Museum and the Caspar David Friedrich Centre, so there is plenty of time to explore afterwards. Before the tours, it's worth making a detour to the tourist information centre redesigned with Friedrich motifs and offering a range of merchandise from soaps to puzzles and scarves. Moreover, a Playmobil figure in the painter's form is to be available in collaboration with Hamburger Kunsthalle. And a large city festival themed "Two Days with Caspar

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"David Friedrich" will be held from 31 August to 2 September.

More information and tours under: www.greifswald.info; Greifswald brochure: www.greifswald.info/service/prospekte/

"Romantic Days at the Königsstuhl"

To mark the anniversary KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre is planning various action days around the theme of painting under the slogan of "Wild & Romantic". Upon the arrival of the original painting "Chalk Cliffs on Rügen" to Greifswald on 18 August the visitor centre is going to host the "Romantic Days at the Königsstuhl" at the original location from 19 to 25 August as a kind of welcome for the painting. During the festive week guests may experience the authentic location of the Romantics as part of an artistic journey through time and take part in inspirational walks and neo-romantic art activities.

Further information under: www.koenigsstuhl.com

Friedrich carved: Puppeteer Karl Huck with handmade artist replica as a guest in the Pomeranian State Museum

"Caspar David Friedrich - Letters from the Sea of Clouds". This puppet play is Seebühne Hiddensee's start into the anniversary year. It is a story about the Dresden museum servant and art carpenter Emil Geisselbrecht and his dream of his own theater. Centre stage takes his passion for Friedrich's landscape paintings, in particular his work "Drifting Clouds" that he uses as a backdrop for his theatrical dreams. The premiere of the performances featuring an ensemble of theatre puppets made by Christian Werdin, among them a portrait of Caspar David Friedrich as a puppet, will take place at the Pomeranian State Museum on 21 January at 3pm. Further performances are scheduled for 11 and 25 February, 10 and 24 March, 7 and 21 April, 3 November, and 8 and 15 December. Beyond that Karl Huck and his play can be experienced at Putbus Theatre and on the sea stage on the Isle of Hiddensee.

Further information (coming soon): hiddenseebuehne.de

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Route of North German Romanticism is extended to Rügen

The 54-kilometre (bike) route of North German Romanticism, also digitally perceptible, has existed since 2018. Active culture lovers can follow in the footsteps of Caspar David Friedrich, Karl Lappe, Philipp Otto Runge, and Friedrich August von Klinkowström. To mark the anniversary year, the route is to be extended to Cape Arkona on the Isle of Rügen and will then measure about 285 kilometers in total. One of the most impressive stops is likely the KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre, a place in whose vicinity Friedrich once found inspiration for his work "Chalk Cliffs on Rügen". The new tour running predominantly along the Baltic Sea Coast Bike Trail is to be offered as a cycle tour bookable online from 2024 due to a co-operation with the company Mecklenburger Radtour. The project is coordinated by the "naturally romantic" network coordinated by the Vorpommern Tourism Association since 2013 and comprising about 20 partners collaborating on the theme of romanticism in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

Further information under: romantik.vorpommern.de

Augmented reality app brings Eldena Abbey ruins to life

With the new freely available Eldena Abbey app, the abbey ruins of the same name in Greifswald can now be viewed as a 3-D model at the location of choice. The app, probably most impressive when tried out on site, also allows users to look inside the building. In addition, detailed information about the history of the abbey and the order is presented. The service app was designed by Greifswald programmer Thomas Michael and completed by Greifswald company Müller & Wulff GmbH.

Further information under: www.greifswald.de

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Icing on the cake

With the Old Towns of Stralsund and Wismar, as well as the beach forests of Jasmund and Serrahn, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is represented four times on the list of UNESCO World Heritage sites. Ten immaterial treasures of our state also belong to Germany's UNESCO cultural heritage

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For exactly 20 years, it has enjoyed World Heritage status – the **Old Town of Stralsund**, nearly entirely surrounded by water, which once effectively protected it from attackers. Today, a blue belt hemmed with green surrounds the town center of the city from the Hanseatic and Swedish period. On land, three painterly ponds reflect the churches towers, bastions and walls. And in the center stand some of the most important structures of the Northern German brick Gothic clustered in one narrow space.

The iconic crown jewel shines on the Old Market square: the six-gabled decorative facade of the City Hall, which seems almost to melt into the double spires of the Church of St. Nikolai. Diagonally across from it stands the Wulflamhaus from 1380 with its crow-stepped gables and small arrow turret – the residence of the mayor, Bertram Wulflam, who was the richest man on the Baltic in his time. At the New Market, on the other hand, the Church of St. Mark rises like a majestic “Mountain of God” into the heavens. And as the third flower of this bouquet, the Cultural Church of St. Jakobi watches over the city walls and gables houses. The “Red Giants”, as the churches of the brick Gothic are reverently known, invite the wonder of marveling guests not only thanks to their ribbed vaulted ceilings – the Buchholz organ, Stellwagen organ and Jakobi organ are all world-class instruments which regularly raise their powerful voices to the glory of God.

Precisely 116 kilometers further west, the **Old Town of Wismar** enjoys both the same status and the same renown. It is clear what so fascinated the filmmaker in the backdrop of the classic silent film “Nosferatu – eine Sinfonie des Grauens” [“Nosferatu – a Symphony of Horror”], released exactly 100

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years ago: the breath-taking panorama from the harbor with the brick giants St. Nikolai, St. Marien and St. Georgen. And directly behind the Old Town, a heritage region of 76 hectares containing 1,500 houses, of which 400 enjoy individual protection as listed historical buildings. Along the Grube, a small canal, medieval merchants shipped their goods north to the warehouses and stores in the Old Town. On the Schweinsbrücke [Pig Bridge], they literally went “hog wild”, driving their livestock across the bridge, and memorialized by four bronze sows. The market square, as well, still looks almost exactly as it did in the time of Nosferatu with its fountain and cult bar “Alter Schwede”.

Since 2011, five German forest regions have also been recognized as World Heritage sites, enjoying the same exceptional status as Yellowstone National Park, Victoria Falls and Darwin’s Galápagos Islands. With this, UNESCO honors the exceptional and universal value of “Germany’s old beach forests” – as ecosystems “which have, uniquely in the world, influenced the appearance of an entire continent”.

Our state enjoys a double portion of this bounty. In the **Jasmund National Park** on the island of Rügen, the grandiose backdrop of the beach forest fascinates visitors as it plunges spectacularly from the white cliffs of the chalk coast into the blue-green sea – a natural spectacle which inspired the famous painter Caspar David Friedrich nearly 200 years ago to create fantastic works of art again and again. It is thanks to the location that the beaches not only survive but even thrive and grown exceptionally old – due to the inaccessible location, the Jasmund beach forest has never been used for logging.

The beach forest of Serrahn in **Müritz National Park** in the lake district is also a typical lowland beach forest as can only be found in the northeast of Germany – a forested landscape of Ice Age hills with hundreds of lakes, moors and meadows where numerous rare animal and plant species make their homes. In this water-rich biotope, cranes and Great Bitterns live, while Sea Eagles and Ospreys make their nests. Threatened species, such as the barbastelle bat and hermit beetle, parasitic fungi such as porcelain fungus and innumerable insects, fungi, lichens and moss make their homes in towering ancient trees and dead stumps.

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What do dance, theater music, customs, festivals and artisanal crafts have in common? They all belong to **immaterial cultural heritage**. The following forms of cultural expression from Mecklenburg-Vorpommern have been included in the federal registry and thereby recognized as exceptional on a national level: the Malchow Festival, the Barth Children's Festival, the "Tonnenabschlagen" [barrel breaking] on Fischland and Darß, the thatching trade, Low German Theater, and the charburning and tar distilling trades, the traditional artisanal production of Darß doors, the maintenance and sailing of *Zeesboote* in the Western Pomeranian Bodden landscape, the custom of the "Martin's Man" and the playing of the diatonic accordion.

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Under the Spell of the White Divas

As a phenomenon of architectural history, so-called Resort

Architecture has adorned the beaches of the Baltic coast for over seven hundred years

**Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
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With masculine features and powerful biceps – the sirens have a somewhat unusual appearance. Meier, the owner of the villa, had ordered a Poseidon with a full beard and trident, but his wife asked the sculpture for a gender change. The beard had to go, breasts were added and Poseidon became a water nymph. That was 1912, as the tiny village of **Binz** was rapidly transformed into the “Sorrento of the North” with a spa house and sea bridge, men’s and women’s beaches and a sophisticated flair enjoyed to the full by the aristocratic, economic artistic and cultural elite.

The architectural expression of the boom: Resort Architecture was in, and in a big way. On the beach promenades and village center, villas like radiant white strings of pearls arose which, at first glance, appear to all be the same. But that couldn’t be more wrong. As is the way with divas, each has its own character and charm. Depending on the desires and preferences of the owner, each lady is clothed in Renaissance or Baroque, Classicism or Victorian style, or even a corset of Fachwerk. They adorn themselves with temple portals and columns of the ancient world, but also enjoy triangular gables and pronounced bay windows. The eyes of their windows may be exotically Gothic, or stylishly Art Nouveau. As eye-catching porches, they love wooden balconies with filigree carving or metal work and cheeky pointed caps on their heads in the form of small towers or ridge turrets. They appear in the traditional dress of the Alps, in a Nordic outfit or Russian furs. In short, it is a mad circus troupe that parades itself under the name Resort Architecture and has its specific appeal in its eclectic collection of styles and eras.

The leader of the pack among the Resort Architecture icons of Binz must surely be the spa house. This most photographed building in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is entwined with the history of the Baltic beaches like no other. Within the walls of this impressive edifice, with its two front towers, visitors go on a journey through time back to the age of the German empire, sense the glamour and

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frenzy of the Roaring 20's and breathe tradition and flair in every corner of the vast ensemble. Known today at Travel Charme Kurhaus Binz, it remains a landmark and eye-catcher on the promenade and sea bridge.

The history of the bathing industry on the Baltic begins in 1793. As the summer residence of the Dukes of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Heiligendamm because the first bathing beach in Germany. That initial spark, however, experienced its first fresh winds of summer nearly 80 years later with the founding of the German empire in 1871. Within 25 years, three dozen Baltic beaches were created where a holiday at the seaside was now affordable for the growing middle class. New methods of healing using moorland, salt water, chalk and thermal springs also led to a boom in the spa and bathing industries. Spa and social centers, hotels and restaurants, sea bridges and promenades, theaters and libraries, concert chambers and casinos, gardens and sports facilities – all arose in the mixed style of Resort Architecture, creating a unique holiday atmosphere and, ultimately, grew to be a trademark of tourism on the Baltic.

Alongside Mecklenburg's largest Baltic bathing beach **Kühlungsborn** in the west and the **island of Rügen** (Binz, Göhren, Sellin, Putbus), the highest density of Resort architectural brilliance can be found on the **island of Usedom** in the so-called "imperial baths" of Ahlbeck, Bansin and Heringsdorf. **Heringsdorf** in particular has truly earned its reputation of the "Nice of the Baltic", since nowhere is the Resort Architecture more magnificent and elegant than here. At the most glamorous beach of the Usedom triumvirate, half a dozen genuine icons glitter along the beach promenade alone: Villa Staudt, where Kaiser Wilhelm II was once invited to tea; Villa Oppenheimer, the favorite subject of the painter Lyonel Feininger, who spent his summers here from 1908 to 1912; Villa Bleichröder, where visitors even today still feel like mini-monarchs; or the ocher-colored Villa Oechsler with its sinfully expensive portico columns made of black-green porphyry and Venetian gable mosaic on a golden background with a shine only otherwise claimed by kings and churches. Scarcely less magnificent is the neighboring town of Ahlbeck surrounding the old surviving sea bridge with its tower restaurant. All in all, it is a treasure that is meticulously protected and maintained: One the islands of Rügen and Usedom alone there are well over 800 Resort Architecture structures which are listed historical buildings.

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The unique eclecticism, the colorful character and diversity in close quarters – Resort Architecture unites elements in a relaxed and easy way that never belonged together and no one had ever dared to unite before. On the other hand, two additional features unite nearly the entire overall appearance: Almost every villa boasts terraces or verandas, balconies or porches for breakfast and tea, fresh air and a view of the sunset. Secondly, nearly everywhere the buildings are dominated by radiant white which lights up the houses and town with a bright, friendly glow, today as much as in the days of the Kaiser.

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To Happiness, by Boat

Whether by house boat or raft, by canoe or for fishing – there is nearly limitless freedom to be found on lakes, rivers and on the sea

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Go aboard. Cast off. Float away. Sail leisurely over glittering waters into nearly endless horizons. Determine your own way and when to take a break. Swim in the most beautiful places. Become one with nature. Watch beavers and kingfishers on the shore, sea eagles and ospreys in air. And otherwise, just enjoy the sun and the water – limitless freedom is just that simple. On a house boat or raft, as a base for swimming or fishing, as a sun deck or holiday home – it's an all-in-one affair.

Vacationing on an with a **house** boat – this style of peaceful holiday in an intact natural environment is enjoying enormous popularity and is booming like no other segment of the tourist industry. More and more guests are taking advantage of the offerings of around 150 charter companies in the northeast, whose house boat fleet has more than doubled over the past ten years. On most inland waters, by the way, leisure captains can cast off with only a brief introduction – without the need for a boating license.

Within the enormous network of this blue paradise – together with the rivers and lakes of Brandenburg, the largest water sports region in Europe – Müritz in the heart of the Mecklenburg lake country holds a special pride of place. It is the heart that doubtless pumps sea-loving leisure captains to all points on the compass, for example along the Müritz-Elde waterway to the state capital of Schwerin. Ideal regions for house boat skippers can also be found, however, on the island of Rügen, in the Greifswalder Bodden and on the backwaters of Usedom and the Stettiner Haff.

Step into the boat. Cast off. Paddle away. And the best part is: **a n y o n e** can do it, and paddle their way to happiness. For this type of active holiday, all you need is a **canoe**, kayak or Canadian canoe with the right paddles – everything else is in abundant supply in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. **Lakes** of

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glass-clear water and sometimes Caribbean colors with fields of water lilies and tunnels of leaves, romance and peace. The unassailable front runners on the paddler's hit list are the lake district of Sternberg, the lake region of Feldberg and the small lake country of Mecklenburg.

Lonely and untouched – these are the **rivers** Warnow and Peene. The latter in particular pulls out all the stops along its magical 80 kilometer course from the Kummerow Lake to the island of Usedom through an unspoiled natural landscape. Not only day-trip visitors can delight in the surroundings – on the Peene, a seven-day paddling tour with camping directly by the river is available. For the white water on the Warnow, on the other hand, halfway between Rostock and Schwerin, the 10-12 km/h rapids require some paddling experience.

As the ultimate destination for kayakers, the **flat water region** of Fischland-Darß-Zingst has made a name for itself – on one hand thanks to the incomparable natural wonders of the National Park of the Western Pomeranian Bodden landscape, on the other due to the Bodden lakes and coastal regions that offer ideal conditions for beginners and professionals alike. Here, there are also guided tours led by kayak specialists with detours to secret places and painterly reed islands. And for those who get the hang of it, a sea kayak can be paddled across the sea and through the straits of the large “pots” to the island of Hiddensee.

Sea kayak enthusiasts can look forward to the water in all its facets when they dare the open **sea** to circumnavigate the island of Rügen. Armed with a sleeping bag and thermal mat, you can paddle from Stralsund over Hiddensee, Cape Arkona, the Wittow peninsula and, naturally, along the chalk cliffs and back to the Hanseatic city at Strelasund – two weeks in total for an experience that is truly exclusive.

With so much water, is it no wonder that Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is also a prime address for those who find happiness at the end of a rod. Whether **anglers** prefer to cast their lines in salt, fresh or brackish water, they can hope for a rich catch, fat fish and even the greatest fisherman's joy: record-breakers are pulled from the sea and Bodden, rivers and lakes more often here than

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elsewhere. The exceptional water quality and targeted maintenance take care of the rest to make sure that first the fish, and then the anglers, are happy.

Demmin in Western Pomerania, for example, is perhaps the area in Germany richest in fish. Believe it or not, 35 species bustle about where the Peene, Trebel and Tollense meet. From Lake Plau and other important spots, 10-kilo pikes have been landed on multiple occasions; in the narrow Luzin and in Lake Tollense, even the “deep sea” whitefish find themselves “on the hook”. Anglers can generally get a bite from eel, perch, bream, crucian carp, carp, roach, rudd and zander.

In the Baltic and Bodden, fishing is possible nearly year-round. The season starts in February with sea trout when the water is free of ice. From March, herring come in large schools to spawn along the coast. From April, the sea bridges, piers and beaches are filled with garfish hunter, who switch to plaice, crucians and most other species of fish from May. Storm-whipped waves delight surf anglers and some even follow St. Peter out into the open water – for deep-sea fishing.

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With Muscle Power Through the Land of Fairy-Tales

With nine long-distance and 21 circular cycle tour routes, the holiday destination Mecklenburg-Vorpommern raises expectations for vacations by bike

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Tourist Board

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Chestnuts and linden trees spread their leafy roof over painterly roads. These lead to dreamy villages where storks and geese chatter. Imposing brick churches rise over cozy towns. In the spring, the scent of golden rapeseed tickles the nose. In the summer, the fresh breeze drives away the oppressive heat. And when the Hawthorn glows gold in the autumn, thousands of cranes migrate south across the sky.

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is the dream destination for innumerable cyclists, or as a starting place, whether it be towards Berlin, Hamburg or Copenhagen – for professional cyclists and hardcore bike enthusiasts, nine eventful **long-distance cycling routes** lead through the diverse natural landscape of the state and beyond. The well-marked routes delight, each with its own charm and special flair. On the **Baltic Coast Cycling Path** (route length 1,140 km), riders travel 695 km through MV and can see wonderfully beautiful Baltic beaches, proud Hanseatic cities, three islands and a peninsula in 15 days. The **long-distance cycling path Hamburg-Rügen** (525 km) connects the northern German million-resident metropolis with Germany's largest island and guides cyclists right across the state – past fairy-tale castles and glittering lakes, over the hills of the "Mecklenburg Switzerland" region to the world-renowned chalk cliffs of the island of Rügen. Those who love rivers will find their joy either on the **Elbe Cycling Trail** (1,260 km), the **Oder-Neiße Cycling Trail** (630 km) or the **Havel-Cycling Trail** (420 km). Those who love bodies of water have come to the right place on the **Mecklenburg Lakes Cycling Trail** (645 km).

A few sizes smaller, the **circular cycling paths** are perfect for active, compact cycling holidays of two days, up to a week. Guests are simply spoiled for choice: Whether it be on **Rügen, Usedom** or **Fischland-Darß-Zingst**, around the **Müritz** or in the **lake district of Sternberg**, whether from river to

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river or on the trail of the brick Gothic style – a total of 12 diverse circular cycle paths, some of which follow themes, bring the exquisite natural and cultural riches of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern to life for cyclists.

Both rich in natural beauty and educational at the same time, the **Western** and **Easter Brick Tours** (370/305 km) offer a long line of architectural treasures in radiant red brick. On the **Castle Tour** (135 km), glories such as the Renaissance-era moated castle Ulrichshusen and the Classicism classics Schlitz Castle and Schorssow Palace form an enchanting string of pearls; on the **Manor House Tour** (120 km) and the **Estate Tour** (230 km), marvel at majestic country seats from centuries past. Finally, the **Residence City Tour** (285 km) follows the footsteps of the Dukes of Mecklenburg through Schwerin, Ludwigslust, Güstrow and Wismar to their former summer seats, pleasure and hunting palaces and residential palaces.

On the **Peenetal Tour** (140 km), on one of the last undeveloped river landscapes in Europe, the “Amazon of the North” spoils cyclists with dreamlike quiet and authentic natural beauty. The **Warnowtal Tour** (230 km), the **Trebeltal Tour** (120 km) and the **Recknitztal Tour** (210 km) are likewise idyllically wild and romantic. This little western Pomeranian river scores with its unspoiled nature in striking solitude with beavers and otters, moor frogs and salamanders, dragonflies and orchids. And all of this only a half hour by car from the tourist magnet that is the Baltic Sea.

The **Elbetal-Schaalsee Tour** (380 km) entirely in the West promises unforgettable natural and historical experiences – in what was once no-man’s-land on the inner-German border, a primal landscape of unique flora and fauna has survived. As a counterpart in the East: the **Stettiner-Haff Tour** (410 km). The cycle journey around Stettin Bay leads from Germany to Poland and back again – via the sister islands of Usedom and Wollin. And in the heart of the state, the **Ice Age Route** (375 km) with the topography unique to the Mecklenburg lake country. As the name implies, this is a gift of the last ice age which the mighty glaciers molded thousands of hills, scraped out hundreds of lakes and dragged boulders weighing multiple tons along with them. A tour to melt for!

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Cyclists looking for a communal experience, the state-wide cycling events and guided tours are highly recommended, for example on the **Mönchgut** peninsula on the island of Rügen, across the 6,000-year-old **Great Moor of Ribnitz** or the **Gnitz Peninsula** on the island of Usedom. Guests are pampered with both historical and culinary treats on a cycle tour of the **Mecklenburg Switzerland** region with organic coffee breaks and dinner in the moated castle of Ulrichshusen. And at the **Velo Classico in the Mecklenburg lake country**, guests can throw themselves into a retro Schale to match their bikes.

P.S.: The following statistics make clear the importance of cycling holidays for the state: In 2021, 1.5 million cyclists made their way through Mecklenburg and Western Pomerania, 40% of whom were on e-bikes. They spent an average of 11.2 days in the state, which is significantly more than the classic MV holiday guest (7 nights). Across the state, more than 270 accommodation providers have specifically adapted themselves to the special needs of cyclist vacationers and a dense network of bicycle rental stations and workshops provide for the required service everywhere. A list of certified "bed+bike" accommodations can be found on the website of the Allgemeiner Deutscher Fahrrad-Club (ADFC) [General German Bicycle Club] at www.bettundbike.de.

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Under the Spell of Brick

Between the Baltic and Lake Country, there are more, and more beautiful, structures made of fired clay than anywhere else in the world. The great Hanseatic cities in particular are incomparable treasure troves of brick.

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Sometimes in the moonlight, sometimes in snow, sometimes romantic, sometimes somewhat mystical – everyone has seen it at some point: the imposing brick ruins of the Cistercian abbey Eldena near Greifswald was the favorite subject of the painter Caspar David Friedrich and became the embodiment of the Romantic age. Even if they will never be painted as congenially again – as a quiet place for reflection, as a great backdrop for a night of jazz or as contrast for colorful autumn leaves or snow, the magical flair of the red walls has remained unchanged until the present day.

120 kilometers to the west, the **Minster** of Bad Doberan rises as a second Cisterican jewel towards the heavens. Considered the most important medieval structure in the state by experts, it is without a doubt the queen of all the monasteries in Mecklenburg. What generations of ingenious monastic builders raised here in the 13th century from the swampy fields to the glory of God is in its synthesis of ascetic rigor and compact elegance nothing less than a Gothic wonder of the highest technical and aesthetic perfection. It is a prime example of the art of harmoniously wedding both massive walls and playful details – all made of brick – with an incredible lightness of touch.

The size and splendor of the medieval art of building can be seen everywhere in the land between the Baltic and the Lake Country, though most of all in the – at the time – incalculably wealthy **Hanseatic cities** along the coast. Here, the “red giants” – as the Gothic brick titans are known – still rule the sky, by which the merchants’ guilds, the church and the aristocracy manifested their power and wealth for all eternity. At the Old Market in **Stralsund**, the double spires of the Church of St. Nikolai blends with the six decorative gables of the City Hall to create an incomparable ensemble, while the church of St. Mary at the New Market reaches towards the heavens with its “Mountain of

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God". Over **Wismar**, the Gothic mountains of the Church of St. George sit enthroned, into which the Church of Our Lady in Dresden would easily fit twice over. The roof of the "Fat Mary" in the shadow of **Greifswald** Cathedral is as large as a soccer field, and the 117 meter high spire of the Church of St. Peter in **Rostock** can be seen from 50 kilometers to sea.

And that is not remotely everything: Beneath the towering spires, the old city centers sit with their splendid gates, towers, ramparts, bastions, walls, facades and gables – and all of it in glowing, red brick. With seven axes, house no. 11 on the Greifswald market square displays the full richness of late Gothic decorative gables – there can hardly be a more beautiful medieval public building anywhere on the Baltic. And lest the many monasteries be forgotten, which devoted themselves especially to the spiritual and bodily care of the poor and sick – they are now the "residences" of, among other things, famous museums, such as the German Maritime Museum with its headquarters in the Katharinenkloster in Stralsund, or in **Ribnitz**, where in the Middle Ages pious Poor Clares prayed, the golden-yellow treasures of the German Amber Museum now gleam.

The trail of these stones leads far into the past. Through christianization and the foundation of cities, a explosion in construction was triggered in the Middle Ages unlike anything before or since. The new era demanded solid, impressive buildings that required more than wood and clay as construction materials. In order to undertake the immense construction projects, bricks had to be "fired" from clay. Until that time, this was a tiresome exercise, as the bricks had to be formed by hand and were therefore irregular. The clever merchants succeeded in achieving a breakthrough with a revolutionary technology: They invented wooded forms, allowing the bricks to be mass produced with consistent results. Bricks fired at between 800 and 1000 degrees were suitable for columns and walls, for decorations and pinnacles. From just a few basic building blocks, varying arrangements alone allowed for a remarkable range of patterns. And wherever the bricks limited the architectural options, master builders invented their own language of forms consisting of gables, arches, patterns, ornaments, glazing and colorful surface textures. It is interesting to note that the typical brick color develops during firing when yellowish iron hydroxide is transformed into red iron oxide.

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The whole glory and majesty of the Gothic brick architecture is especially atmospheric when the Santa's electric elves switch on hundreds of thousands of lights in the old towns of Rostock, Stralsund, Wismar and Greifswald. In their light, the majestic market squares and winding old town alleys are transformed into magical backdrops for the annual Christmas markets. In Stralsund, it even continues underground: the cellar of the city hall, the Rathauskeller, is considered the largest surviving Gothic vaulted ceiling anywhere on the Baltic and, during Advent, becomes a cozy backdrop for the Christmas market and Santa Claus.