

Rostock | 07/03/2023

Press kit Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Tourist Board at ITB Berlin 2023

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You will find the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern booth in hall hub27 at booth 200.

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BETWEEN HIKING SPRING AND GAME-MEAT WEEKS

Event highlights of 2023 in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

**Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
Tourist Board**

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Mecklenburg-Vorpommern's calendar of events for 2023 is brimming with activities and the countless possibilities may make it difficult to decide. The State Tourism Board event database under www.off-to-mv.com/en/event-search lists up to 300 events per day between the Baltic Sea coast and the Lake District in summer. There are, however, some established series for which a note in the calendar is already worthwhile. Music lovers have the opportunity to experience concerts against exceptional backdrops at the open-air series **"Sounds of Nature"** (Naturklänge) on the Fischland-Darß-Zingst peninsula, and the **"Mecklenburg Lakes Tour"** (Mecklenburger Seen Runde) is great for some serious pedalling. Here is a selection of event highlights:

March: Rügen Festival Spring (Festspielfrühling Rügen)

The Rügen Festival Spring initiated by the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival kicks off the music season 2023 on Germany's largest island from 17 to 26 March 2023. Under the artistic direction of the Dutch violinist Noa Wildschut a total of 25 events will be held on the island, including spa orchestra, chamber, or orchestral concerts at extraordinary venues like the protected island of Vilm, the Sellin pier or the spa house in the Baltic resort of Binz.

For further information visit: www.festspiele-mv.de

May: "Mecklenburg Lakes Tour"

The ninth edition of the Mecklenburg Lakes Tour takes place from 19 to 20 May 2023 and about 5000 biking enthusiasts are expected to join. With the 300-kilometre bike tour for everyone via Mirow and Penzlin and the 100-kilometer women's circuit in the Feldberg lake district, there is a total of two routes for the sports fans. Kids can attempt the "Mini Mecklenburg Lakes Tour" that is two to six

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kilometres long, depending on age.

For further information visit: www.mecklenburger-seen-runde.de

May: "ArtOpen" (KunstOffen) in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

Hundreds of artists between the Baltic Sea shores and the Lake District will open their workshops and studios to participants in the nationwide "ArtOpen" campaign over the Whitsun weekend from 27 to 29 May 2023, the 29th campaign of its kind. Artists traditionally display a yellow umbrella over the entrance or a blue-and-white flag to indicate they are offering a glimpse into their creative spaces.

For further information visit: www.auf-nach-mv.de/kunst/kunstoffen

June: Environmental Photography Festival »horizonte zingst« 2022

The 16th edition of the »horizonte zingst« environmental photography festival takes place in the Baltic Sea health resort of Zingst on the Fischland-Darß-Zingst peninsula from 7 to 11 June 2023. Participants can practice photography in workshops, visit exhibitions or learn at lectures about climate change, the dangers of plastic waste in the oceans and the protection of biodiversity.

For further information visit: www.horizonte-zingst.de

June: "MidsummerRemise – The Long Night of Nordic Manor Houses and Mansions"

On occasion of the summer solstice numerous manor houses and mansions open their gates for culture lovers at the "MidsummerRemise" in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Off they go on 17 June 2023 in Mecklenburg when lots of estates are accessible from 1pm to 9pm. Manor houses and mansion owners grandly welcome the summer to Vorpommern (West Pomerania) between 10am and 5pm the day after.

For further information visit: www.auf-nach-mv.de/schloesser/mittsommerremise

From June on: Open-Air Series "Sounds of Nature" at Fischland-Darß-Zingst

Enthusiasts will be able to indulge in the 22nd season of the open-air series "Sounds of Nature" on the Fischland-Darß-Zingst peninsula from June till September. Visitors experience open-air concerts

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against the backdrop of stunning natural settings, among others at the Wieck harbour on Darß, at the High Shore between the Baltic Sea spa towns of Ahrenshoop and Wustrow, and at the Graal-Müritz rhododendron park. Programme details will be available in spring 2023 under www.naturklaenge.net
For further information visit: www.naturklaenge.net

From June on: Schwerin Palace Festival celebrates Premieres

Visitors to the Schwerin Palace Festival 2023 can look forward to plenty of premieres. The ballet gala Connexion marks the start in the Great House on 22 June. Directed by ballet director Xenia Wiest, international dancers, including those from the Vienna State Ballet and the Zurich Ballet, will present choreographies to music by Johannes Brahms (1833 to 1897), Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840 to 1893), and other personalities. The Open Air Museum of Folklore Schwerin-Mueß will host the first performance of the play "De Amerikofahrer", based on the emigrant tale of Johannes Gillhoff's "Jürnjakob Swehn", on 24 June. In addition, the German-language premiere of the musical "Little Miss Sunshine" based on the film of the same title by U.S. screenwriter Michael Arndt, will be shown in the courtyard of Schwerin Castle on 1 July.

For further information visit: www.mecklenburgisches-staatstheater.de/schlossfestspiele

From June on: Festival Summer Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

The three-month Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival Summer from 17 June to 17 September 2023 by the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival will bring music to manor houses, churches, palace parks and industrial halls from the Baltic Sea coast to the Lake District.

For further information visit: www.festspiele-mv.de

August: 32nd Hanse Sail in Rostock

The 32nd edition of the Hanse Sail, the biggest maritime festival in the northeast, will attract numerous visitors to Rostock and Warnemünde from 10 to 13 August 2023. More than 100 traditional sailing ships will sail along the Warnow from Warnemünde to Rostock and offer the possibility for cruises. Beyond that, lots of concerts are held throughout the city, and guests can visit exhibitions and markets. Information on public ship tours and sailing opportunities can be found at www.hanesail.com and www.hanesail.com/mitsegeln or directly at the booking centre of the

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Hanse Sail Association under the phone number +49 381 38129 74.

For further information visit: www.hansesail.com

August: Sweden Festival in Wismar

The 22nd Sweden Festival from 17 to 20 August 2023 lets the Hanseatic City of Wismar commemorate its 155-year affiliation with the Swedish Kingdom (1648 to 1903). The largest Sweden Festival outside the Scandinavian country is celebrated every year from the Old Town to the Old Port with numerous stage programmes, sporting events, and a historical parade.

For further information visit: www.wismar.de

September: Velo Classico

When cyclists in retro clothing take to the starting line in Rumpshagen in the Mecklenburg Lake District from 8 to 10 September 2023, it will be time for the eighth edition of the Velo Classico cycling event. A total of four routes are on the programme, passing typical Mecklenburg villages, old manor houses and quietly situated lakes. Those who want to take it a little easier can opt for the “Happinez Tour” that is about 30 kilometres long, or the “Connoisseur’s Round” that is about 50 kilometres long. In addition, two larger circuits are offered with the approximately 90-kilometre long Lover’s Tour and the approximately 120-kilometre long Hero’s Tour.

For further information visit: www.veloclassico.de

September: Usedom Music Festival

The Usedom Music Festival, one of the state’s cultural highlights, will be held from 16 September to 7 October 2023. During this period, classical sounds can be heard almost everywhere on the vacation island, e.g. in atmospheric churches, in villas in the style of seaside resort architecture, or in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern’s largest industrial monument, the Peenemünde power plant

For further information visit: www.usedomer-musikfestival.de

From September on: “ART TODAY”

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern’s Artists’ Association invites visitors to the state-wide “ART TODAY” campaign. Interested parties will have the opportunity to experience contemporary art at around 130 locations between the Baltic Sea and the Lake District, including galleries, studios, museums,

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and castles.

For further information visit: www.kunstheute-mv.de

From September on: Autumn of Palaces

An autumnal highlight in the northeast is the state-wide “Autumn of Palaces” series, during that numerous lords of the palaces between the Baltic Sea and the Lake District will open their doors and gates from 30 September 30 to 22 October 2023. The planned events include guided tours, concerts, exhibitions and theatre performances in venerable walls.

For further information visit: www.auf-nach-mv.de/schloesserherbst

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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

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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

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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.