



*Witch-hatted
Holsten Gate, an
impressive
gateway to the
town of Lübeck*



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Hanseatic League

LOCATION Germany **START/FINISH** Stralsund/Bremen
DISTANCE 485 km (300 miles) **TIME** 7 days **ROAD**
CONDITIONS Very good **INFORMATION** www.hanse.org

Discover the lesser-visited region of Germany's Baltic coastline, home to cities that were once part of a medieval trading union.

Before the European Union, there was the Hanseatic League. This medieval alliance of trading guilds and city states stretched from the Netherlands to Russia, but it began in the 12th century with just a handful of north German market towns. Nine centuries on, this driving tour links the best of them.

This portion of the route begins in Stralsund, in Germany's far northeast. This pretty, orange-roofed port city is famed for its UNESCO-listed old town, as well as its status as a gateway to the chalk cliffs and sandy shores of Rügen island. It's just a short drive west from here to Rostock, which may lack the classical charms of its near neighbour but has an appealing harbour and easy access to the ever-popular Warnemünde beach resort.

Continue west to explore the handsome Hanseatic cities of Wismar (with its famous wrought-iron fountain) and Lübeck (home to an iconic red-brick city gate) en route to the confederation's best-known asset: Hamburg. Spend a few days here exploring its extraordinary architecture and museums (and nightlife) before ending your travels in Bremen, where the grand town hall testifies to the city's rich history as a Hanseatic power.

another way

Extend your Hanseatic adventure by continuing down to Cologne, heading east via Paderborn and Brunswick, then looping around Berlin and back up to Stralsund. The route linking all the major Hanseatic cities is 1,750 km (1,085 miles) altogether.