# Castle Trail

## Guide for GeoRoute ③
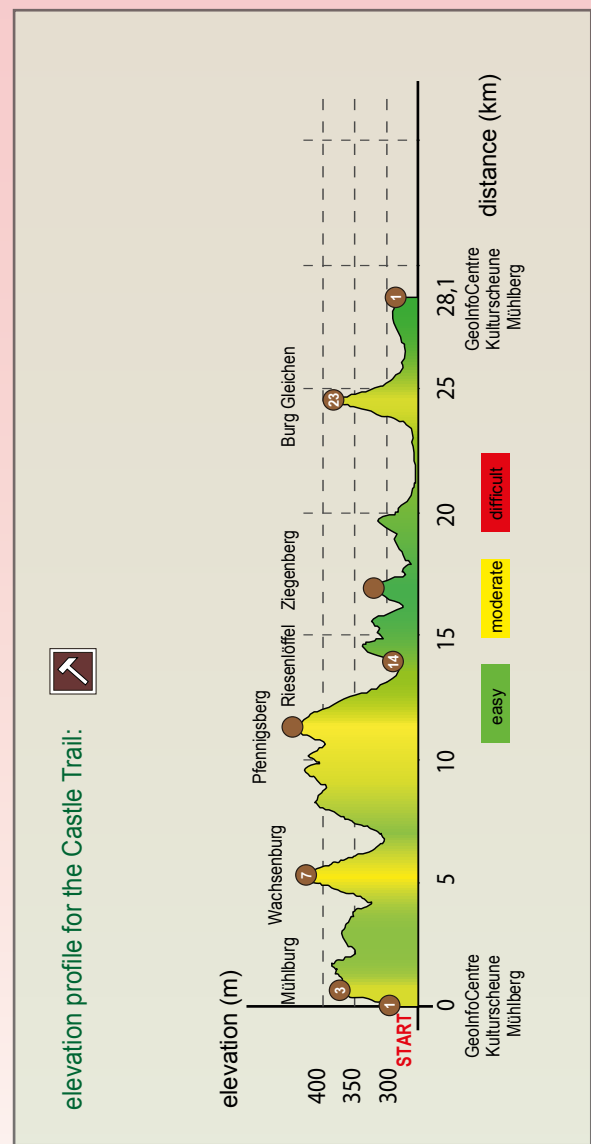
Nationaler GEO Park Thüringen
Inselsberg - Drei Gleichen

NATIONALER GEOPARK INSELSBERG · DREI GLEICHEN

Freistaat Thüringen
Ministerium für Umwelt, Energie und Naturschutz

## Explore the CASTLE COUNTRY - DREI GLEICHEN and visit our GEOINFOCENTRES ⓖ!

1 : 41 000
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### Castle Trail

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ⌖ Stone cross | | |

Castle Trail
GeoRoute 3
"Am Stein" ⑱ Attraction
ⓖ GeoInfoCentre
Geological feature
Spring
Graf-Gleichen Trail

Main hiking trail Jena – Eisenach
Luther Trail
Bicycle Route Thuringian Chain of Towns
Bach Bicycle Discovery Route
InfoPoint
Camping site
Castle
Castle ruins
Church

Stone cross
Field monument
Hotel
Guesthouse
Museum
Viewpoint
Bus stop
Parking lot

elevation profile for the Castle Trail:

**Note:** The overview map of the GeoRoute is not suitable for hiking. Trail maps can be purchased in the tourist information offices, for example in the GeoInfoCentre Kulturscheune Mühlberg.

www.thueringer-geopark.de          www.drei-gleichen.de

## Badlands in the Thuringian Castle Country

The Drei Gleichen-castles are associated with many legends about devastating fires, cruel robber-knights, kidnapped princesses or medieval bigamy. But there is more to the castles than that: they also "guard" an exciting geological treasure that dates back over 200 million years.

The Castle Trail ("Burgenroute") takes you through a gentle and romantic landscape and occasionally reveals places of harsh beauty. These are the so-called Badlands, a very rare type of landscape in Germany. Located on the south-facing slopes of the castle hills, these red and greenish-grey, almost completely vegetation-free, areas are made of mudstones and marl. The very low nutrient content of the soil only supports the development of a grassland or steppe vegetation.

*There where the first dinosaurs once roamed through Thuringia, lives a unique flora and fauna of the continental South European steppes.*

**GeoRoute:** ↗
Length: approx. 31 km (western section approx. 12 km, Middle section approx. 7 km, eastern section approx. 12 km)
Start: GeoInfoCentre Kulturscheune Mühlberg
Difficulty: easy-moderate

**Getting there by train:**
Railway station Wandersleben or Haarhausen,
Train schedule: www.bahn.de

**Getting there by bus:**
Bus lines 870, 871, 354 and bus stops in Mühlberg, Röhrensee, Holzhausen, Bittstädt und Freudenthal
Bus schedule: www.vmt-thueringen.de, www.rbarnstadt.de, www.iov-ilmenau.de

**Our expert Geopark Guides are available to enhance your experience on this trail.**
**Book here: Kulturscheune Mühlberg**

## Attractions along the Castle Trail

**1. GeoInfoCentre Kulturscheune Mühlberg** G
- Tourist information of the Thuringian Castle Country- Drei Gleichen
- Information about the Geopark, permanent display of life in the Middle Triassic ocean around 240 million years ago and about Prof. Herrmann Müller (companion of Charles Darwin)
- temporary cultural and art exhibitions

**2. Rät Sandstone quarry below Mühlburg Castle**
- the Rät Sandstone was used for construction
- first official record of commercial use in 1832
- more information on the Seeberg Trail (GeoRoute 5)

**3. Mühlburg Castle with Radegunde Chapel**
- oldest of the Drei Gleichen castles (first recorded 704)
- fell into disrepair from the 17th century onwards
- today a popular destination with a 22 m tall lookout, 56 m deep 13th century well, and a small museum with temporary exhibitions
- the remains of a chapel dedicated to the last Thuringian princess, Radegunde (518 - 587), are located on the outer bailey
- Opening hours: April - Oct.: Mon - Fri 10 am – 5 pm, Sat – Sun/holidays 10 am – 6 pm

**4. Trinius view on the Gustav-Freytag Trail** ✳
- the viewpoint was built in honour of the author August Trinius at the end of the 19th century

**5. Alabaster quarry below Castle Wachsenburg**
- Alabaster is colloquially also known as false marble
- however, in reality the rock is gypsum (Heldburg-Gypsum)

**6.Badlands**
- very rare type of landscape in Germany
- greyish-green and red very nutrient-poor mudrocks with thin soil cover
- Flora and Fauna similar to South European Steppes



**7. Castle Wachsenburg**
- built as an abbey in 936 for Abbot Meingoth
- used as a prison until the end of the 19th century, then converted to a tourist attraction
- today used as a restaurant, hotel and museum
- Opening hours: daily from 11 am (Mon / Tue closed)

**8. Otto-Knöpfer-House Holzhausen**
- Otto Knöpfer (1911 - 1993) was a famous Thuringian painter (of motifs from the Drei Gleichen region)
- Opening hours: May - Oct: Sun 13 pm - 4 pm

**9. Overview panel for the Geo and Pleasure Trail "From Beer to Bratwurst"**
- provides an insight into the environmental setting for the development of our cultural landscape and regional culinary jewels
- discovery stations with sculptures and audioguide

**10. Gravel pits near Bittstädt**
- the river Ohra flowed here during the ice age, depositing gravel
- today the so-called Urstrom-Kies (ancient river gravel) is extracted near the village; historical quarry in "Heidenholz"

**11. Kupferstrasse ("Copper Road")**
- until the 18th century an important pilgrimage and trade road
- also used to transport copper ore from the 14th century onward, which was processed here e.g. in the Tobiashammer Ohrdruf (hammer mill, today technology museum)

**12. Clay pit Bittstädt on Kirchberg hill**
- the clay was used for the local brickworks

**13. Eulenberg**
- Bunker system of Jonastal

**14. Giant spoon at the Kesselbrunn Arnstadt**
- a 16th century, 2 m tall field monument sculpted from Seeberg Sandstone
- named by the poet Ludwig Bechstein



**15. Gypsum quarries at the Kalkberg**
- part of the northern Wachsenburg graben structure with steeply inclined strata (see 16 )
- early extraction of gypsum for construction purposes
- you can find out more about gypsum and gypsum karst on the Panorama Route (Guide for GeoRoute 2)

**16. Gravel pit Haarhausen**
- abandoned quarry, today a conservation area
- a section of the northern edge of the Wachsenburg graben structure is exposed in the quarry (geol. fault zone: Eichenberg-Gotha-Saalfeld-Fault Zone)
- steeply inclined and folded strata can be seen here in close proximity

**17. Experimental Archaeology Site Haarhausen**
- on show is a reconstruction of a 3rd century Roman pottery with a baking and potter`s furnace as well as stilt houses
- the originals were found in local excavations
- Opening hours: grounds are open all year

**18. Viewpoint "Am Stein"** ✳
- info-station explaining the history and geology of the Roter Berg ("Red Hill")

**18a. Geotope Blumenberg**
- initially thought to be a sinkhole due to its form
- however it is an old gypsum quarry

**19. Gräfenbrunnen in the Gleichental**
- high yield well that was already mentioned in the 16th century
- according to legend this well is said to have supplied water to Castle Gleichen

**20. Exposure at the Hainbiel**
- cut during the construction of the Autobahn in the 1930s
- shows fold formation just like those on the gravel pit (see 16 )



**21. Freudenthal**
- according to legend, when Count Ernst von Gleichen escaped from Muslim captivity together with the sultans daughter, whom he had married whilst on the run and who had helped him escape, he was greeted here by his first wife

**22. Saurian fossil site at the Hasenwinkel**
- Fossil saurians (bones, teeth) were found in the Upper Triassic shale-marl sequence of the Kallenberg incl. from *Plateosaurus engelhardti*
- you can see a reconstruction of this saurian on the Saurian Discovery Trail (Guide for GeoRoute 6) ✋

**23. Castle Gleichen**
- largest of the Drei Gleichen castles
- first officially recorded in 1034 and inhabited until the 16th century
- notorious for the legend about the double-wedded Count von Gleichen (see 21 )
- today tourists can visit the ruins with walls from the 11th century, a lookout with a permanent exhibition "Barren Beauty – Steppes in Thuringia"
- Opening hours: April - October: daily 10 am – 6 pm

**24. Oil and pearl barley mill**
- one of the 7 mills of Mühlberg, first recorded 1528
- driven by water from the Springquelle
- mill has a 18th century pounding and press mechanisms
- only functioning mill of its kind in Thuringia

**25. Travertine in Weidbach**
- formed between 3500 - 7000 years ago by precipitation of carbonates from the water of the Mühlberg Spring

**26. Mühlberg Spring**
- crystal clear karst spring – formed around 7000 years ago in a sinkhole
- yielded enough water to power 7 mills in the past centuries
- Kneipp-walking pool



**Communities along the Castle Trail:**

**Mühlberg**
- First mentioned in the deed of donation made by the Thuringian duke Hedan II. on May 1, 704; it is the oldest town in Thuringia together with Arnstadt and Grossmonra
- typical cluster village, town wall until mid 19th century
- more attractions are linked by the local hiking trail "Mühlberger Runde" 🌿

**Holzhausen**
- first recorded in 786
- the village has several historic half-timbered houses

**Bittstädt**
- first recorded in 786
- the romanesque St. Ägidien Church is worth a visit

**Haarhausen**
- first recorded in 786
- settlements in the parish date back to the 4th and 5th century

**Arnstadt**
- Bach and residential town with historic town centre
- worth seeing: the New Palace (Neuer Palais) with castle museum and baroque old town Mon plaisir, Bach and Liebfrauen Church, Neideck Castle ruins
- The Thuringian Bratwurst is first recorded in 1404 on an invoice for the Maidens Convent of Arnstadt

**Places to eat along the Castle Trail** 🍴

Bittstädt: Inn "Zur Heide"

Haarhausen: "Gemeindegaststätte"

Holzhausen: Western Inn "Lasso" ,

Hotel "Frankenberger", Café "Holtzhaus",

Restaurant "Veste Wachsenburg"

Mühlberg: "Ratskeller Mühlberg", "Weisses Ross",

"Schützenhof", Ice-cream parlour "Am Spring"

Wandersleben: Inn "Burgenlandung"

More information about opening hours can be obtained at the GeoInfoCentre Kulturscheune Mühlberg.



**Timetable of the geological development of the Geopark**



25 today (Holocene) 🚶
10 Ice age (Pleistocene)

2
22  6
18a  5  Heldburg-Gypsum
16
15

G - post-orogenic granites (e.g. Ruhla and Trusetal Granites)
THG - Thuringian Main Granite

**Visit the other 4 GeoRoutes in the Drei Gleichen Area!**