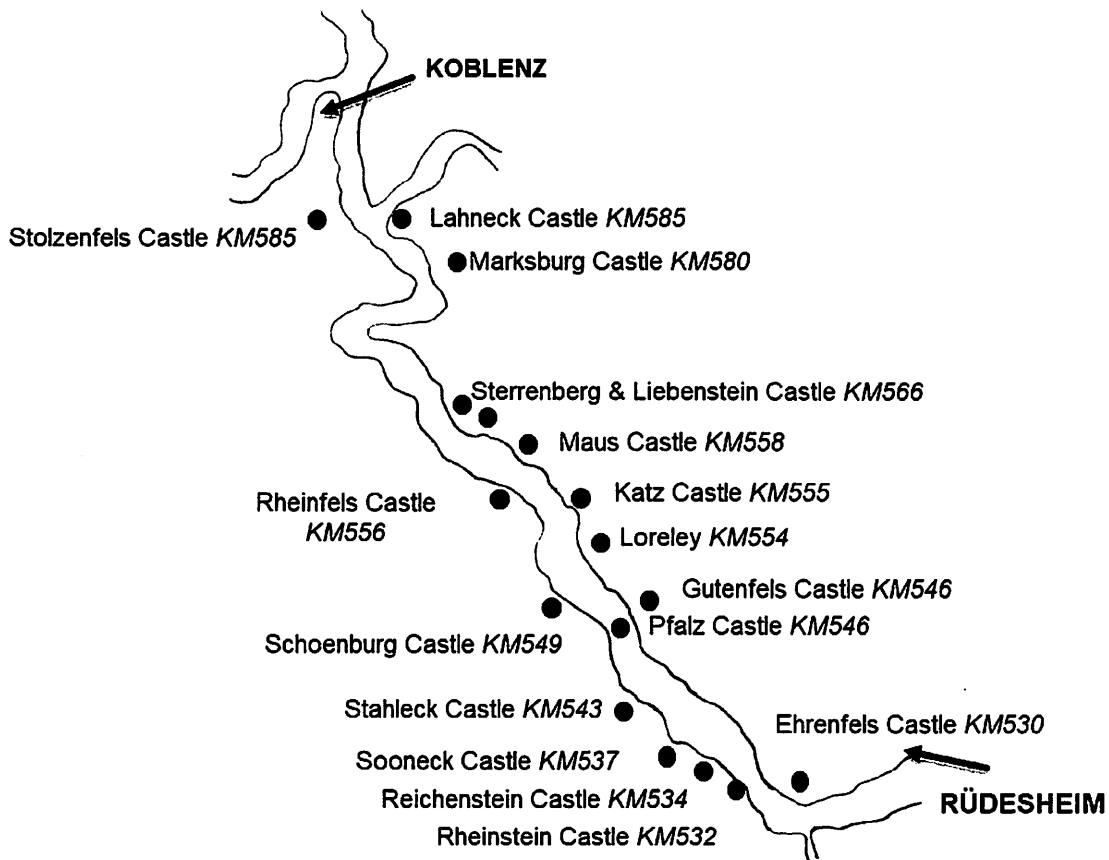


Main Castles of the Romantic Rhine Gorge



Direction: Koblenz to Rudesheim

R 585.2 High above the river is the Castle of *Stolzenfels*. Built originally in the 14th century, it was razed to the ground by the French in 1689. At the height of the German Romantic Movement of the last century it was lovingly restored by *Friedrich Wilhelm* of Prussia. His architects bestowed the castle with a lavish supply of turrets and crenellated battlements.

L 585.0 Overlooking *Ober-Lahnstein* is *Lahneck Castle* which prompted Goethe to write a romantic poem which sparked off the German Romantic Movement responsible for saving the *Rhine* castles. It was first mentioned in 1244 and was restored in 1854. An early single lady-tourist visiting the castle in the days before restoration, became trapped when a rotten walkway collapsed. No-one heard her cries for help and she, unfortunately, died.

L 580.5 Rising above the town of *Braubach* is the *Marksburg Castle*. It is the only authentic, fully preserved medieval fortress on the *Rhine*. It is the seat of the "Association for the Preservation of German Castles". It has been faithfully restored on the basis of architectural drawings from the year 1607. It has been furnished much as it must have been at that period and is a fascinating castle to visit.

L 566.5 *Castle Sterrenberg* dates from the 12th century and has at times been owned by the Emperor and by the Archbishops of *Trier*. After 1568 it was uninhabited and used as a quarry for building stone. In 1970 part of the castle was reconstructed and is used as a residence. It is open to the public and there is a restaurant. The Castle is owned by the State of *Rhineland-Palatinate* in which we at present find ourselves.

L 566.3 *Castle Liebenstein* is perhaps 100 years younger than *Sterrenberg* from which it is separated by a screen of walls. Note the square defensive residential tower. This seven storey keep is partially preserved, privately owned and is open to the public. These two castles of *Sterrenberg* and *Liebenstein* are also known as the castles of the "Enemy Brothers".

L 558.7 *Maus Castle* was founded in 1354 by the Elector Archbishops of *Trier* and completed 30 years later. Architecturally, it is one of the most beautiful castles on the *Rhine*. There is a four-storey residential tower and note the projecting corner turrets which show the defensive nature of the structure. The castle was restored between 1900 and 1906. It is owned by a company based in *Berlin* and is not open to the public.

R 556.9 The *Castle of Rheinfels* is the largest on the *Rhine*. It was built in 1245 by the Counts of *Katzenellenbogen* to protect their right to levy tolls on the river. It was besieged in 1255 for a whole year by the League of Rhenish Cities which had been organised to put an end to the activities of such lords who were impeding trade with their arbitrary tolls on shipping. But the castle was not taken. It is open to the public.

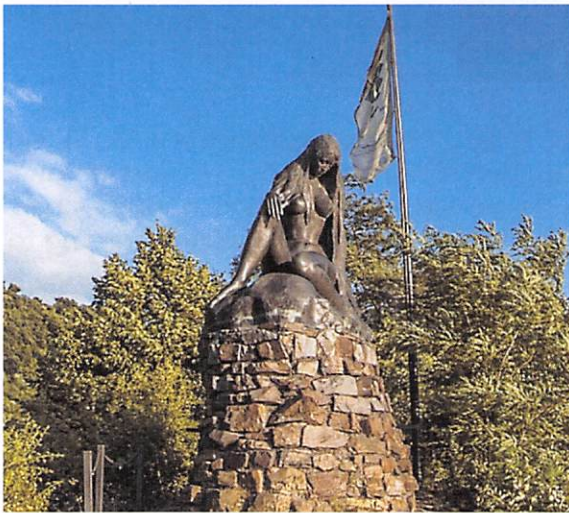
L 555.8 *Katz Castle* is named for the nick-name of the counts of *Katzenellenbogen* who built it. This castle, together with their castle *Rheinfels* on the other side of the *Rhine*, gave the Counts firm strangle-hold over trade on the *Rhine*. "Katz" is also the German word for "cat" and the Counts used to joke that they would eat the rival inhabitants of Castle "Maus" ("Mouse") within view above *St. Goarshausen*. It is not open to the public.

L 554.3 Do not expect a mermaid sitting on a rock in the river! The *Loreley rock* is bigger than that. In fact it is the whole of the rocky spur of hard quartzite rock which impinges on the river and narrows the valley. The *Loreley rock* is 435 feet high. You will be able to see a flag-pole on the top where, one is led to believe, the *Loreley* used to sit and sing.

The river here is at its very narrowest - just some 370 feet - and the concentrated current is so strong that it has eroded the river bed to a depth of 89 feet. To make matters worse, the river executes a sharp bend here, and the captains have to contend with whirlpools and dangerous cross-currents. It is not surprising that a legend should grow up of a young enchantress who lured sailors to their doom here.

Everyone knows *Heinrich Heine's* famous poem about the *Loreley*. But do you know the background? Heine had been jilted by his cousin and then had no more success with her sister. Heart-broken, he poured his grief into half-a-dozen or so rather maudlin poems of which the "*Loreley*" is one. There is no doubt that the enchantress with her golden hair in the poem is Heine's real-life cousin.

For those of you who do not know the plot of the poem, it tells of a beautiful maiden who sits on the top of the *Loreley Rock* in the evening sun, combing her golden hair with a golden comb while she sings. Her singing is so enchanting, that the boatmen on the river below are captivated, forget what they are about, and come to grief on the rocks and in the Whirlpools.



Loreley statue

R 549.5 Overlooking the town from its vine-clad summit is *Castle Schoenburg*, the name meaning "Beautiful Castle". It was given by Emperor *Frederick I (Barbarossa)* to one of his officials in 1166. The taxes which the Lords of the castle gathered from *Rhine* traffic made them one of the richest and most powerful families on the *Rhine*. The castle remained in the possession of the family until destroyed by the troops of Louis XIV. In 1885 work began restoring the castle and today it houses a youth hostel and a hotel.

L 546.4 Overlooking Kaub is *Castle Gutenfels*. The castle is first mentioned in 1257 and gets its name which means "Good Rock" from the fact that it was successfully defended against an attacking army for one year in 1504. In 1807 *Napoleon* sold the castle as a stone-quarry. It was restored 70 years later and is now a hotel.

546.0 In the middle of the river is the *Pfalz Castle* which *Victor Hugo* described as "a ship of stone eternally floating on the *Rhine*". It was built as an island fortress for the purpose of levying river tolls. There has been a toll-station on the Island since the early Middle-Ages, which ensured that no ship could slip by without paying its dues.



Pfalz Castle

R 543.1 The view of *Castle Stahleck* is perfect. Part of the outer defence-walls facing us have been removed and we get a marvellous cross-section of the interior of a medieval castle. It was first mentioned in 1135, destroyed by the French in 1689 as part of their policy to dismantle German fortifications on the *Rhine*, and rebuilt according to the original plans in the last century.

R 537.4 The *Castle of Sooneck* is one of the oldest castles on the *Rhine* and dates back to about the year 1,000. In the 13th century it was already notorious as a den of Robber Knights and was besieged and destroyed by the Emperor Rudolf of Habsburg. The castle was rebuilt only to be laid in ruins by the French in 1689. It was rebuilt by Crown Prince Friedrich *Wilhelm* of Prussia in 1834 in neo-Gothic style.

R 534.3 *Castle Reichenstein* was first mentioned in 1213 as a possession of an abbey. It developed into a den of Robber Knights and was destroyed for the first time by the League of Rhenish Cities in 1253 as they attempted to stamp out the Barons. It was rebuilt by the Robber Barons but then destroyed again in 1282 by Emperor Rudolf of Habsburg and destroyed by the French in 1689. It was rebuilt in 1900 and its houses an important collection of antlers and weapons and is open to the public.

R 532.9 *Castle Rheinstein* some 260 feet above the *Rhine* and perched on a projecting rock. Established by the Archbishops of *Mainz* as a toll-station, it was duly destroyed and finally rebuilt in flamboyant neo-Gothic by Crown Prince Friedrich of Prussia last century. There are guided tours at all times of the valuable interior furnishings and the collections of armour and art treasures.

L 530.5 *Ehrenfels Castle* was built by the Archbishops of *Mainz* in order to secure their hold on shipping entering the *Rhine* Gorge at *Bingen*. During periods of war the treasures of *Mainz* Cathedral were kept here. The castle was built in 1208. The French destroyed the castle in 1689 but it is still an impressive ruin flanked by two circular corner towers.