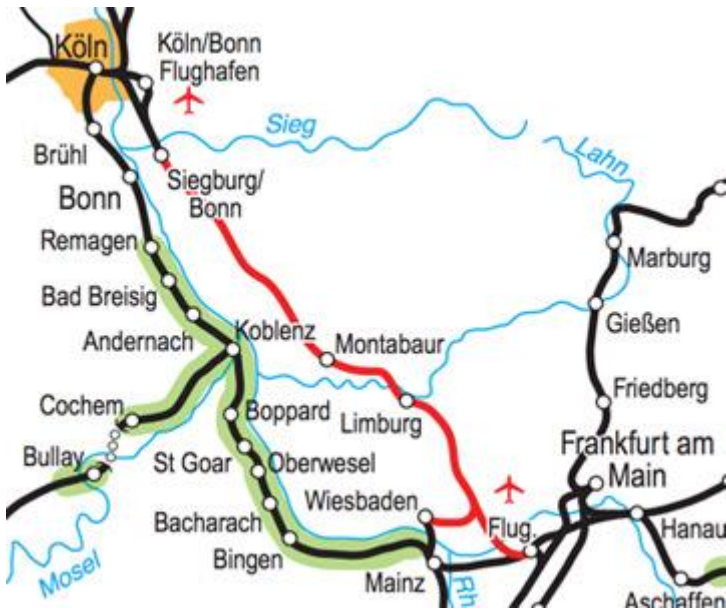


[Take the classic Rhine Valley route](#)

When you travel between Amsterdam/Brussels/Cologne in the north and Frankfurt/Munich/Switzerland/Austria in the south, you have a choice. The fastest route is shown in red on the map below, using the Cologne-Frankfurt high-speed line which opened in 2002. But it can be nicer to take the original curvaceous railway along the scenic Rhine Valley, past cruise boats, barges, vineyards, hilltop castles and the legendary [Lorelei Rock](#). On the map below, scenic routes are highlighted in green. The slower Rhine Valley route takes an extra hour, but I think it's time well spent. [Watch the video!](#)



Cologne to Frankfurt via the new high-speed line
= 1 hour 18 minutes

Cologne to Frankfurt via the classic Rhine valley route
= 2 hours 19 minutes

Red = high-speed lines
Green = scenic routes

This map extract is courtesy of the [European Rail Timetable](#). It's definitely worth buying this map for your European travels, you can buy online with shipping worldwide at www.europeanrailtimetable.eu.

There's more information about the West Rhine Valley Railways at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Rhine_Railway.

How to buy tickets via the Rhine Valley...

- By default, journey planners assume you want the fastest route and usually send you via the modern high-speed line. If you want to travel via the slower Rhine Valley line, simply enter *Koblenz* as a *via* station with stopover duration left as zero. If a train calls at Koblenz, then it's using the classic Rhine Valley route not the high-speed line, as you can see from the map above.
- All the best train booking websites allow you to specify a *via* station, including the German Railways website www.bahn.de (click *Add intermediate stops*), Raileurope.co.uk (click *More options*), www.trainline.eu or the Belgian Railways international website www.b-europe.com.
- Even though the high-speed line is now open, some fast comfortable ICE & Intercity (IC) trains still run via the Rhine Valley route every hour, and a couple of times per day you'll find comfortable direct EuroCity (EC) trains between Cologne & Switzerland or Cologne & Salzburg in Austria running via the Rhine Valley.
- *Special panorama car on trains EC8 & EC9...*

One of the two direct Cologne-Switzerland EuroCity (EC) trains conveys a superb 1st class Swiss panorama car, [see photos of this type of panorama car here](#). The train with the panorama car is EC9 Hamburg-Cologne-Mainz-Basel-Zurich southbound leaving Cologne around 10:53 and EC8 Zurich-Basel-Mainz-Cologne-Hamburg northbound arriving Cologne around 17:05.

There is no extra fee to sit in this lovely panorama car, indeed even the seat reservation is free when included with a 1st class ticket bought at www.bahn.de. Just note that you can't tell which seats will be on the river side as the car could enter service either way round.

The panorama car is car number 263 on both trains. You can check the train formation at www.vagonweb.cz - change it to English, then click *composition* then click *EC* against *Germany* then look for EC8 & EC9.

How to reserve seats in the panorama car...

If you book a 1st class ticket on this train at www.bahn.de you can click *Select seat* then choose a seat in car 263. You can tell 263 is a panorama car as it has only 9 bays of seats, all other 1st class cars have 10 bays per car. If you already have a ticket or railpass in 1st class, you can make a seat reservation on its own using www.bahn.de, just click the *Seat only (no ticket)* link at the bottom of the page. Alternatively, you can just go along and sit in any empty seat in that car if you've a 1st class ticket.

Which side of the train to sit?

- There's a railway on both side for much of the Rhine Valley route, but the main line runs on the west bank. *So the river is on the left-hand side going south, right-hand side going north.*
- You can't usually specify a side when reserving seats, as the reservation system knows the carriage seat layout, but doesn't know which way round that car will be when marshalled in the train. But as German train are *reservation optional* not all-reserved, you can always move to any unreserved empty seats on the side of the train nearest the Rhine. Little LED displays above each seat (or little paper tickets, on old-school trains) show which seats are reserved and which are free.

A journey down the Rhine in pictures...

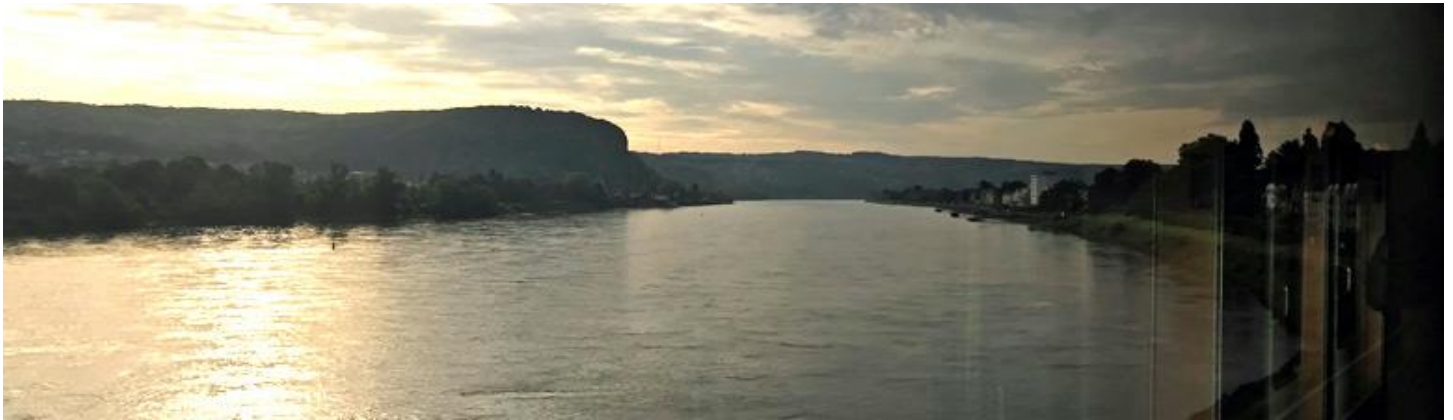
Here are some photos of a journey down the Rhine, ordered assuming you're travelling south. Although most of these were in fact taken from an early-morning northbound run down the Rhine on the Innsbruck-Cologne [Nightjet](#).

From Cologne to Bonn...

Mainline trains leave Cologne (*Köln* in German) and about 19 minutes later call at Bonn. The line starts running along the river shortly after Bonn.

From Bonn to Koblenz: *The Bridge at Remagen...*

Between Bonn & Koblenz you'll pass Remagen, probably non-stop if you're on a fast train. You may have seen the 1969 film *The Bridge at Remagen*, about a key crossing of the Rhine captured almost intact by the Americans in March 1945, see en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Remagen. Your train sweeps round a bend to the left here (going south) before passing non-stop through the town, but as you can see in the photo below taken on the bend just north of the town, there's no bridge here today. The Ludendorff Bridge eventually collapsed after extensive bombing and shelling and was never rebuilt. However, the towers at the western end of the bridge remain and have been turned into the Remagen Bridge Peace Museum, www.bruecke-remagen.de.



From Koblenz southwards...

Around 34 minutes from Bonn, the train calls at Koblenz. If you want to explore the Rhine Valley more, this is arguably the base from which to do it. The most scenic part of the Rhine Valley is from Koblenz to Mainz...



Kamp-Bornhofen & the Hostile Brothers...

On the far bank just south of Boppard you'll see the little town of Kamp-Bornhofen (pictured below) with two castles above it, Schloss Sterneberg & Schloss Liebenstein. For the legend of the hostile brothers, see www.castle-liebenstein.com.



The Legend of the Lorelei...

Just south of Sankt Goar station (also passed through non-stop on mainline trains) you'll pass the legendary Lorelei rock, on a difficult bend in the river for navigation. The Lorelei rock is quite distinctive, but you'll also see its name written on a white-painted square at its base, visible in the photo below. Read about the legend of the Lorelei at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lorelei.



Pfalzgrafenstein Castle...

South of the Lorelei between Oberwesel & Bacharach you'll pass the Pfalzgrafenstein Castle on Falkenau island, a toll-collecting station dating from 1326 and one of the Rhine's most distinctive sights. Read more about it at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pfalzgrafenstein_Castle.

