



UNESCO  
Biosphere Reserve  
Bliesgau





## *Land of orchids and savoir-vivre*

Man and nature in harmony – this is impressively demonstrated in Bliesgau Biosphere Reserve. A visitor can see it in the valuable and beautiful meadow orchards, species-rich meadows, extensive beech forests and the floodplain of the river Blies. However, it also has a population density that is higher than the national average, a fact that makes the biosphere reserve unique in the world. Despite so many people, the region has become a refuge for many rare animal and plant species. Nature and culture are the silent architects here, connecting diversity to unify the biosphere reserve.

Bliesgau is home to around eighty percent of the Saarland population of the endangered little owl. The population of the rare marsh fritillary is particularly high and on the Muschelkalk (shell bearing limestone) soils one can admire nearly half of all orchid species occurring in Germany; their display is particularly beautiful.



However, Bliesgau is also a region in transition – shaped over the centuries by traditional extensive farming, it is now trying to resist the trend towards globalization. The biosphere reserve promotes the regional marketing of its own agricultural products. So, for example, the local fruit association Verein Bliesgau Obst e.V. helps orchard owners in the care of their fruit trees and in the marketing of the crop. Then there is the Bliesgau box, a gift idea with regional charm; it is filled individually with, for example, Bliesgau sparkling apple secco, various honeys, speciality sausages or selected handcrafts. Something that has been especially fruitful is the cooperation between Bliesgau Biosphere Reserve and the Bliesgau oil mills, which has meant that Bliesgau is one of the most diverse oil landscapes in Germany.

As a long-inhabited area, Bliesgau also offers many opportunities to search for traces of Roman and Celtic settlements. And the scenic charm in the south of the region is complemented in the north by the town of St. Ingbert, with its industrial history and extensive culture.

Left: Man and nature in  
harmony!

Right: pyramidal orchid,  
one of over 30 orchid  
species in Bliesgau



The "Beeder Biotop"  
amid the Bliesau

## *Wild romanticism on foot and by bike*

Begin your journey of discovery with a visit to the water buffalo in "Beeder biotope". From a viewing platform you can also watch white storks nest-building. Follow shaded paths through Tauben valley, the largest core zone of the Biosphere Reserve, and along Kirkeler rock trail with its impressive bunter sandstone formations, and reach Kirkeler castle – over 1,000 years old. In the warmer months of summer, the Kirkeler Burgsommer festival recreates the days of knights and knaves.

After a visit to the old baroque town of Blieskastel, you can cycle by e-bike from north to south through the Biosphere Reserve on the Blies valley trail, enjoying the fantastic nature of the wildly romantic Bliesau.

## *Donkeys and E-bikes, storks and meadow orchards*

**Monday:** By e-bike along the Blies to the Franco-German Culture Park at Bliesbruck-Reinheim. The French town of Sarreguemines is nearby.

**Tuesday:** A tour on the Biosphere Bus offers the opportunity to get off at individual stops in order to explore the region.

**Wednesday:** In the footsteps of the St James pilgrims through the Biosphere Reserve to Gräfinthal monastery .

**Thursday:** Discover the southern Bliesgau region by donkey. Enjoy the landscape more slowly and consciously, at the pace of our long-eared four-legged friends.

**Friday:** A morning visit to Bliesgau oil and mustard mill in Einöd to sample the different oils, such as Camelina – the oil of the Celts. And in the afternoon a walk on the educational trail "Ecological backpack through Blieskasteler Forest".

**Saturday:** Below ground the Biosphere Reserve guarantees sensational sights with a visit to Schlossberg Caves, Europe's largest mottled sandstone caves.

**Sunday:** Guided tour of the orchid area in Gersheim. As well as the numerous orchids there are other rare animal and plant species to discover.

# General information

## Facts and figures

*Location:* in south-east Saarland, on the border with France and Rheinland-Palatinate

*Area:* 361 square kilometres

*Elevation:* 190 to almost 400 metres

*History:* founded in 2007, recognized by UNESCO in 2009.

*Landscape types:* escarpment landscape. In the north, more urban influence with beech forests on mottled sandstone, in the south very rural: semi-dry limestone grassland with orchid meadows and orchid-beech forests on limestone soils, meadow orchards, Blies floodplain landscape.

## Biosphere Reserve information

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## Accommodation & tourist info

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## Books and maps

*Reiseführer Biosphärenreservat Bliesgau*  
ISBN 978-3-89920-810-8

*Der Bliesgau: Natur und Landschaft im südöstlichen Saarland*  
ISBN 978-3-923877-42-3

*Wander- und Freizeitkarte Saarpfalz-Kreis*  
Bestellung über Saarpfalz-Touristik  
(see Accommodation & tourist info)

*Der Bliesgau: Natur – Menschen – Geschichten*  
ISBN 978-3-96176-106-7

*Wilder Bliesgau*  
ISBN 978-3-96227-015-5

*Faszination Bliesgau*  
ISBN 978-3-96227-000-1

*Arten, Biotope und Landschaften im Biosphärenreservat Bliesgau*  
von Dr. Dieter Dorda

*Nationale Naturlandschaften im Saarland*  
Bestellung über Biosphärenzweckverband Bliesgau

## Directions

*By train:* by ICE to Homburg or Saarbrücken, by regional train to Lautzkirchen, Kirkel or St. Ingbert; the Saarbahn runs from Saarbrücken to Kleinblittersdorf.

*By car:* take the A 6 or the A 8, exit for St. Ingbert-Mitte, Limbach, Blieskastel or Homburg-Einöd.

Young little owls need an intact cultural landscape



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