

Kuckuckswanderung (cuckoo hike) in the heart of the Palatinate Forest and to the Naturfreundehaus hut in Elmstein

Length of the tour: 6.1 km | Duration: 1.5 hours | Ascent: 190 m | Incline: 188 m

We begin the tour at Elmstein station and walk along Bahnhofstraße road, pass the station building and the minigolf premises until we reach the sign that points us the way to “Naturfreundehaus Harzofen” on the right side. We cross Speyerbach brook, take the right turn-off in front of the playground and hike along Speyerbach brook until we reach Hauptstraße road. We cross the road turning right and turn directly into a tarred road that leads uphill. From here the way ascends all the way to the highest point, which is at 340 metres altitude. After some 400 metres the roads ends and we continue on a well-developed gravel roadway—straight ahead. At this point it is important to ignore the signs, because they point you to a way not suitable for prams. We arrive at a T-junction and choose the left way (see sign no. 2 of the Nordic Walking Route). After 200 metres we turn sharp right and reach the highest point of the entire tour after 1.4 kilometres. At this crossing, the roadway on the right invites us to follow it. This way runs downhill in a pleasant way. We pass a little herd of cows that enjoy grazing here. After 300 metres, we turn sharp left. Shortly afterwards, we can spot the Appenthal part of the village on the right hand side. The roadway leads us through a number of Christmas tree plantations. You can choose and fell a tree here on your own before Christmas.

After two kilometres we turn sharp right again and continue on a steeply inclining way. A narrow path on the right invites us to follow it. After a few metres we reach the Naturfreundehaus Harzofen hut and rest here after a 45 minutes hike. The Naturfreundehaus offers Palatinate food, a pretty terrace and a marvellous playground for children. In the summertime, there is barbecue outdoors on the days the “Kuckucksbähnel” (Cuckoo Railway) commutes between Neustadt and Elmstein.

To head back, we walk along the playground and the barbecue site and take the right path walking uphill for 300 metres. We take the left roadway at the

fork and continue the way that runs pleasantly downhill. After a total of 3.5 kilometres, we reach a crossroads. Here you could take an extra excursion to the left, downhill and through Appenthal village and even reach the starting point after 500 metres. A playground attracts older children here and you can take a look at a wood-fired oven and a reproduction of a resin oven. However, we choose the roadway to the right and approach the last ascent of this tour. After a total of 4.06 kilometres we have made it: We arrive at Elmstein's television tower. We walk round the mountaintop and continue on the so-called Sonnenweg (sun way) straight ahead. This is a flat section. After 500 metres we reach a comfortable bench and enjoy a great view on Elmstein and the Schafhof part of town, which is situated somewhat higher. Having walked for another 400 metres and at a height of 310 metres, we follow the left roadway. 300 metres further down the way, we turn sharp left and follow the yellow markings with the numbers 3 and 7. This way loses height very quickly and we can already see the end of the tarred road, where we were at the beginning of the tour. From here we take the familiar way back to the station.

Excerpt from the book: Christina Fuchs-Riesch, Philipp Fuchs: Mit dem Kinderwagen durch die Pfalz, Knecht Verlag, Landau 2020, 16,90 Euro. ISBN: 978-3-939427-54-4