



Photos by Karl Weisel
Hessen Minister President Roland Koch welcomes 104th ASG leaders to the Wiesbaden Schloss. Photo left: American visitors tour the Kurhaus and other sights in and around Wiesbaden.

Hessen

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the Hitler dictatorship, the state of Hessen, as it is known today, was established from parts of the peoples' state of Hessen, the province of Hessen Nassau as well as some smaller regions," said Thomas Berg, a representative of the Agency for Civic Education. "Other parts, as for instance Rheinhessen, were turned over to Rheinland-Pfalz. In his Proclamation No. 2 of Sept. 19, 1945, the American Supreme Commander, Gen. Lucius Clay, announced the establishment of 'Greater Hesse,' which would later become the federal state of Hessen."

This "popular and most fortunate act of the military government" following World War II, Berg said quoting a German adviser to Clay, made real the vision of German reformers of the mid-1900s.

"I grew up in Butzbach with the Americans, and it is sad to see that your numbers are dwindling in Hessen," Kartmann said, explaining that for the past half century since the end of World War II the state of Hessen has developed into one of the successful economic centers in Europe, partially thanks to the support, military and economic assistance of the United States.

"I'm convinced that in order for our alliance to remain strong it must become the rule again that we talk with one another, rather than about one another," he said.

"We need you as ambassadors to tell people in America that we Germans are good hosts," said



Photo by Karl Weisel

Members of parliament discuss education issues and budget constraints. Photo below: Stefan Seifert describes different wines at Kloster Eberbach.

Hessen Minister President Roland Koch, during a short break from a heavy schedule of debate concerning budget belt-tightening on the floor of the Hessen Parliament. "For me and my colleagues in the parliament it is important to have Americans in the state. Whenever I am a guest in the United States, no matter where I go, it's easy to meet someone who has served in Hessen or who

has a father or mother who served in Hessen. ... We are very interested in you feeling comfortable while staying in our state of Hessen."

With so many Americans tracing their ancestry to Germany and thousands of American military families having called Hessen home over the years, ties remain strong, said Lt. Col.

Steve Steinger, 104th ASG chief of staff. "Despite the political situation between our two countries, you have continued to support us and have



Photo by Anemone Rueger

made us feel welcome here."

"We've conducted these Hessen government tours for a number of years," said Anne Adams, deputy U.S. forces liaison officer for Hessen, Norddeutschland and Thüringen.

"Traditionally they are for newly arrived commanders stationed in Hessen to make them more familiar with the state. In this case we wanted senior staff leaders of the 104th ASG and its base support battalions to get a better understanding of the politics, people and economy and to

hopefully pass it on to their subordinates. The seminar, hosted by the State Chancellery, was also an expression by the current minister president of his appreciation for the support provided by the United States."

Members of the delegation, which included leaders from the 1st Armored Division, ASG and BSBs, toured the parliament, visited historic sights in and around Wiesbaden, listened to lectures about the history of Hessen and visited the Kloster Eberbach monastery. Participants learned that the Frankfurt International Airport is the largest of its kind in continental Europe, Hessen is a pharmaceutical and financial world leader and numerous inventors have hailed from the German state. The state is also a region of geographic contrasts with 40 percent of the state covered in forested areas — more than any other German state.

In another show of support and solidarity, about 100 U.S. military family members will be invited to Wiesbaden's Schloss Biebrich the afternoon of Dec. 11 to enjoy a traditional German advent celebration, Adams said. The Hessen minister president, who has invited American families to join him for the holidays for the past several years, will once again host the holiday affair for selected families from throughout Hessen. Soldiers and families from the 221st, 233rd, 284th and 414th BSBs will be invited to the event, which welcomes particularly those with one or more family members serving in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Last year's holiday event at Hanau's Schloss Philippsruhe and the 2001 celebration at Schloss Biebrich featured visits and gifts from St. Nick, holiday carols performed by local German choirs and refreshments. More details will be announced as plans for the event are finalized, Adams said.

Taking it easy on the Kühkopf Hessen's largest nature preserve

Story and photos by Karl Weisel
104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office

Cormorants, falcons, owls and kingfishers are just a few of the some 240 different birds that live or regularly stop by Hessen's largest nature preserve.

Located just across the Rhein River from Guntersblum and not too far down the road from Dexheim, the Kühkopf-Knoblochsau nature preserve offers miles of hiking and biking trails through fields, woods and meadows that are home to scores of animals. While some of the 2,370-hectare park was once cultivated for agricultural use, after extensive flooding, the farmland was mostly abandoned in 1983.

The section known as Kühkopf (cow's head) is completely surrounded by water with an "Old Rhein" arm of the river branching off from the main body of the river and encircling the roughly cow's head-shaped land mass. Visitors must cross a bridge at Stockstadt or hop on a

ferry to access the island. Once on the Kühkopf they'll find several signs directing them to paths which encircle and criss-cross the nature preserve.

Information center

When entering from Stockstadt, one can park the car in a large parking area and then hike or bike over the bridge into the preserve. A couple of outdoor eateries are situated not too far into the park. There is also an information office located a short walk into the park which features information about the flora and fauna to be found in the nature preserve and maps of the area.

The information center is open Saturdays, Sundays and German holidays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

This time of year one is invited to stroll on the raised paths which circle the island and to climb up into several wooden viewing booths to look over the reeds and marshy ground which are home to wild geese and any number of other

feathered creatures. The paths also make their way through forest areas, meadows dotted with purple flowers and past ponds deep in the woods which are home to fish-feeding birds, frogs and other critters.

Those who decide to bring their bikes can make a serious day trip out of it by biking around the island, taking the ferry over to the wine country around Guntersblum and Oppenheim, stopping for lunch in one of the scenic vineyard towns, biking through the vineyards and then taking the ferry back over the river at Oppenheim to pedal back down the river to the parking area near Stockstadt.

A bicycle and pedestrian ferry, which only operates on Sundays, is available to transport visitors from the Guntersblum river bank over the Rhein to the Kühkopf. Car ferries are available at Oppenheim and Gernsheim, that operate all week long. If driving through Oppenheim be sure to take the time to visit the castle ruins set up in the vineyards above the town. Likewise

Gernsheim, on the eastern bank of the river, features a good stopping point with an excellent fish restaurant, the Rheingold, set directly adjacent to the ferry crossing overlooking the flowing river traffic.

The Kühkopf-Knoblochsau nature preserve is located about halfway between Oppenheim and Gernsheim. Parking in Stockstadt is recommended unless one is coming from the direction of Dexheim whereby one might consider parking by the ferry crossings at Gunterblum or Oppenheim. If traveling from the Mainz-Wiesbaden areas take highway 9 which runs south along the river through Nierstein and Oppenheim before coming to Gunterblum and the turn-off toward the ferry. Or take the ferry across the river at Oppenheim and drive on to Stockstadt (look for signs to the Kühkopf preserve parking area).

Website

For more information about the nature preserve point your browser to www.rpda.de/kuehkopf/english.

Exploring the nature preserve by canoe or kayak is another possibility. Outdoor Recreation centers occasionally features trips to the area or one can rent the gear from Outdoor Rec and then paddle on the Old Rhein portion of the river which flows around the nature preserve. Check with your local Outdoor Recreation check-out center for more information.



Visitors enjoy a few fall rays and watching passing excursion boats on the Rhein River from the Kühkopf.



Cyclists will find miles and miles of trails through and around the nature preserve.



A family of swans enjoys the relative serenity of the nature preserve.



The Old Rhein offers a quiet paddle through a natural setting around the Kühkopf.



Cyclists and pedestrians travel on the König Gunther II ferry to cross from Guntersblum to the Kühkopf nature preserve.