



LEGENDARY MOUNTAIN

# The Brocken in Harz National Park

Nationalpark  
Harz



Dear National Park guests

Do you want to know why the spruce on Brocken are barely taller than 5 metres, when the Brocken Railway first reached the mountain top, or when the National Park was established? Then this brochure should accompany you during your visit to the highest mountain in northern Germany.

Even if you have chosen one of the more than 300 foggy days in the year, the approximately 1.6 km long circular walk offers much to see. On a clear, dry day the maximum visibility is at least 230 km.



Numbers guide you along the path and through this booklet (on the walk, look for white numerals on a dark wooden sign). For a plan of the Brocken, see page 12.

Please contact us if you want to know more about Harz National Park and Brocken. Meet us on top of the Brocken or on the paths there.

Of course you can also join our guided walks on the Brocken, which start every day at 12:15 at the entrance of the weather station (May to October) or at the entrance of the Brockenhaus (November to April).

Your National Park Rangers

## 1 Views of the Harz foothills

From board 1 you see lying in front of you not only Renneckenberg, Hohnekamm and Jägerkopf, but also Wernigerode Castle (13 km) and Halberstadt (32 km).

When you look closely you will notice that the Harz foothills are characterized by intensive industrial and agricultural use, while forestry predominates in the Harz. Ordered, equal-height treetops in geometric areas show where natural forests were converted into managed spruce forests long before the designation of the National Park. However, original nature could survive where the economic activities of man could not, especially at high altitudes or on the steep slopes of the valleys.

## 2 Brocken Railway

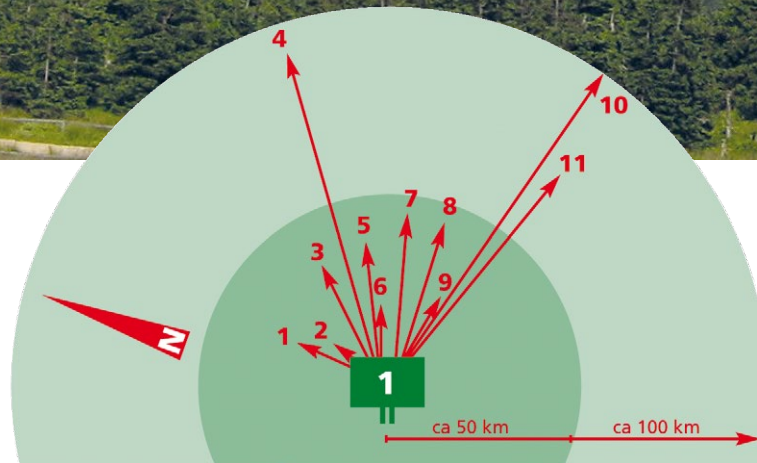
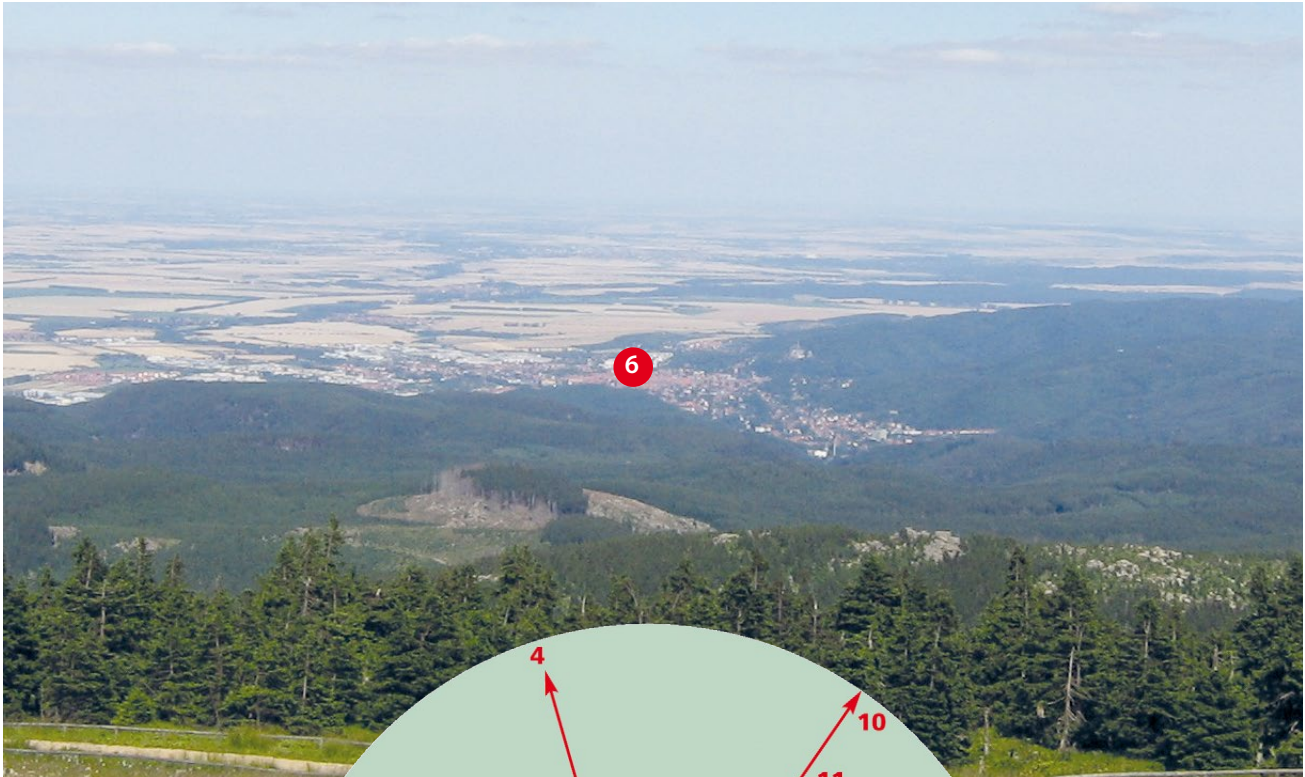
As early as 1899 the 100 cm gauge Brocken Railway was laid from Drei Annen Hohne via Schierke to the Brocken. It negotiates an ascent of 588 metres on the 16 km route. From 1961 only supply trains of the GDR border troops reached the summit.

Since 1991, steam locomotives have been rolling again carrying holiday traffic to the Brocken. Thus, the railway could be integrated into the concept of visitor guidance to the Brocken through the Harz National Park. Since the train track passes

### Brocken profile

- + At 1,141 metres above sea level, the highest mountain in northern Germany
- + The only German central mountain peak with a natural forest line
- + Heath vegetation probably since the Ice Age
- + Climate like the Alps at 1,800-2,500 metres above sea level
- + Annual average temperature is about 4°C
- + Mystic mountain: scene of Walpurgis Night in Goethe's „Faust“.





- |   |                     |    |   |
|---|---------------------|----|---|
| 1 | Osterwieck (20 km)  | 7  | Hakel (37 km)                           |
| 2 | Ilseburg (9 km)     | 8  | Quedlinburg (36 km)                     |
| 3 | Huy (32 km)         | 9  | Elbingerode (13 km)                     |
| 4 | Magdeburg (79 km)   | 10 | Halle (100 km)                          |
| 5 | Halberstadt (32 km) | 11 | Eisleben (71 km),<br>Harzgerode (41 km) |
| 6 | Wernigerode (13 km) |    |   |





operation. Only by acting together can potential damage to natural resources be averted.

### 3 Brocken Garden

The show and experimental garden on the Brocken was founded in 1890 by Prof. Dr. Albert Peter, at that time Director of the Botanical Garden of the Georg August University of Göttingen. Until 1949, Göttingen University was responsible for the Garden, then Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, and finally, after 1990, the National Park.

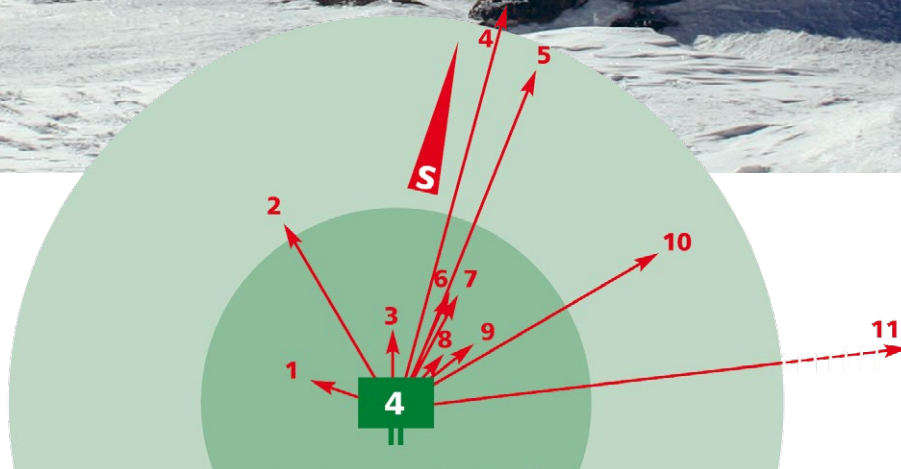
Brocken Garden has always fulfilled conservation and research tasks, served educational purposes and been made available to Brocken visitors. To achieve these tasks and objectives, the Garden was divided into experimental and show plots. The show part of the garden is hard to see from the circular path. You are therefore cordially invited to a garden tour, which starts on weekdays at the entrance of the meteorological station at 11:30 and 14:00 (mid-May to mid-October). On weekends and public holidays, a visit is only possible in combination with circular walks guided by a Ranger, beginning at 11:00 and 13:00. In the Garden there are garden plants introduced from the high mountain regions of the world, among others. If you would like to know more, then you can get a booklet called „Brocken Garden in the Harz“ from Brockenhaus.

through some of the most sensitive areas of the National Park, the National Park Authority is committed to close cooperation with the Brocken Railway for an environmentally friendly

In board 2 you can see the natural part of the experimental plot. Studies on the restoration of the Brocken plateau mainly take place here.

The splendour of the present Brocken Garden is only possible through intensive professional maintenance. Since the beginning, there were several periods when Brocken Garden was not at all or only very irregularly maintained. This meant that at the start of work by the National Park in 1990, only 97 of the formerly 1,400 cultivated species were detected. Today, visitors to the garden can marvel at more than 1,500 plant species from the high mountain regions of the world. Restoration of the Brocken summit and public relations work are essential tasks of this botanical garden.





- |   |  |    |                        |
|---|--|----|------------------------|
| 1 | Elbingerode (13 km)                      | 7  | Bad Lauterberg (22 km) |
| 2 | Kyffhäuser (57 km)                       | 8  | Achtermannshöhe (5 km) |
| 3 | Wurmberg (5 km)                          | 9  | Großer Knollen (20 km) |
| 4 | Großer Inselsberg (106 km)               | 10 | Meißner (85 km)        |
| 5 | Wartburg (95 km)                         | 11 | Kahler Asten (163 km)  |
| 6 | Ravensberg (21 km),<br>Stöberhai (17 km) |    |                        |



#### 4 Devil's Pulpit and Witches Altar

Inspired by the impressions of his first ascent of Brocken in winter 1777, Johann Wolfgang Goethe wrote the Walpurgis scene for „Faust“. On Walpurgis Night, the night of April 30th, according to tradition witches meet on „Blocksberg“ (the Brocken) at the Devil's Pulpit and the Witches Altar, where they wildly sweep away the last snow of the Brocken with their brooms. In the late 19th century this event became a kind of festival. In 1896 the Bad Harzburg Walpurgisnacht society celebrated on the Brocken for the first time. Since 1901 there have been special Walpurgis trains of the Brocken railway. In the following years, Count Christian Ernst of Stolberg-Wernigerode banned the Walpurgis celebrations because of the „hellish noise and rough horseplay“.

Today, Walpurgis Night is celebrated in communities in the National Park, such as Ilsenburg, Bad Harzburg, Schierke, Sankt Andreasberg, Braunlage and Elend.

The granite cliffs facing you remain unmolested by dancing witches and over the decades have become covered with the sensitive map lichen.

On a clear day you have the good view shown in board 4.



#### 5 Dwarf shrub heath

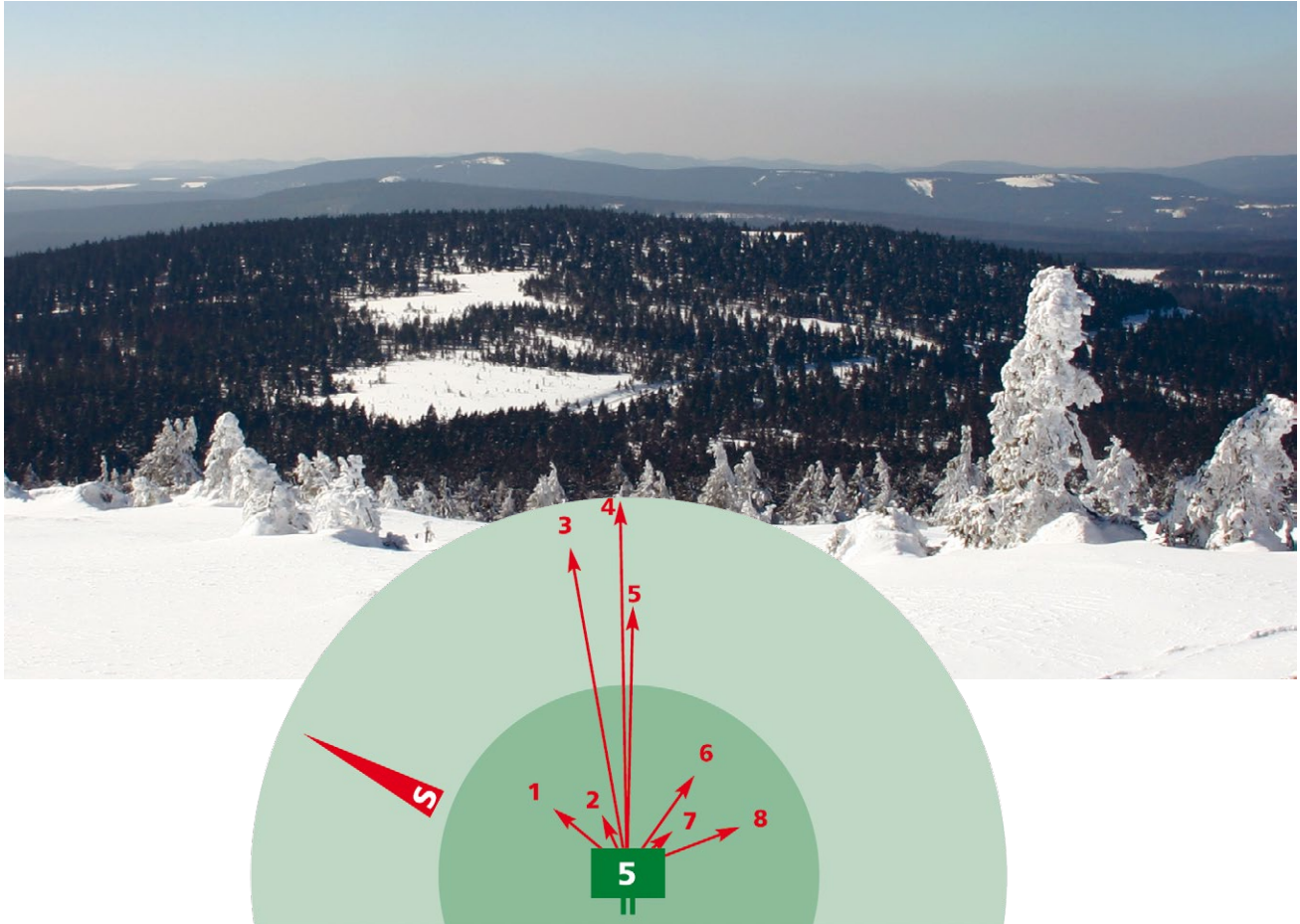
Above the natural tree line on the Brocken there are the remnants of the once large-scale dwarf shrub heath. The formation of a closed forest after the last ice age was prevented here by thin, nutrient-poor soils, a harsh climate, and especially by the wind – conditions for the natural occurrence of these heathland communities. Typical species which grow on the Brocken are Brocken



anemone, Brocken hawkweed and Alpine hawkweed. The presence of these light-demanding species is an indication of the lack of forest cover on the Brocken plateau since the end of the last ice age about 10,000 years ago.

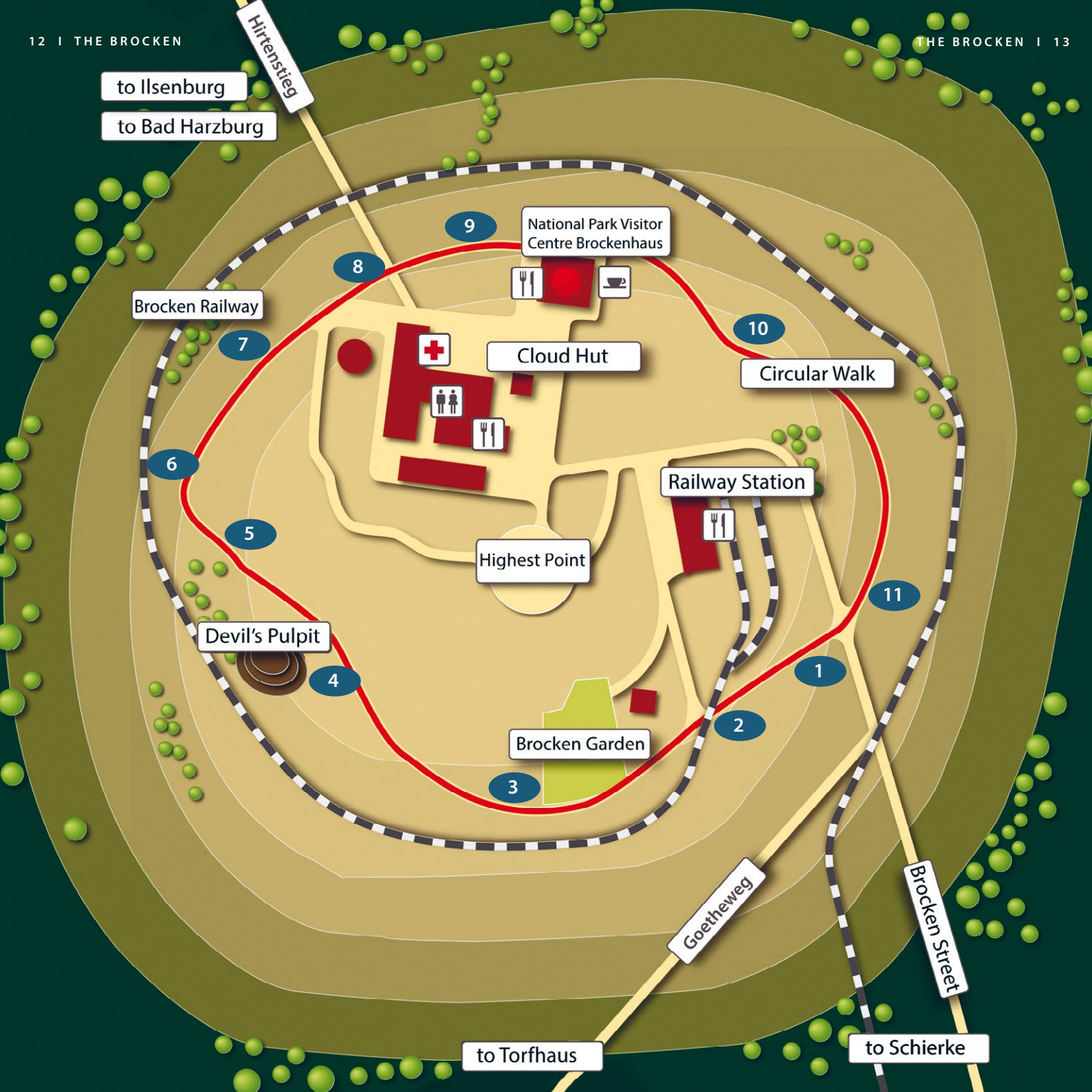
The existing heathlands were strongly influenced over time by human use on the plateau. Over the centuries, grazing and tourism have encouraged the spread of dwarf shrubs such as heather, bilberry and cranberry and changed the character of the Brocken. Although as a result of large-scale restoration the number of potential locations for Brocken anemone and Brocken hawkweed have increased again (both occur only here in Germany), they are highly endangered.

Previously picked for „Brocken bouquets“, the natural heathland vegetation is being threatened today because the nutrients contained in precipitation (e.g. 60 kg of nitrogen per hectare per year on Brocken summit) favour the spread of highly competitive grasses such as Tufted Hairgrass and Hairy Reed Grass.



- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 Ravensberg (21 km),<br>Stöberhai (17 km)                                    | 5 Hoher Hagen (69 km),<br>Sonnenberg (8 km)   |
| 2 Achtermannshöhe (5 km)  | 6 Clausthal-Zellerfeld (19 km)                |
| 3 Meißner (85 km), Gleichen<br>(54 km), Königsberg / Goe-<br>themoor (2,5 km) | 7 Abbenstein (4 km)                           |
| 4 Kassel (98 km), Göttingen<br>(56 km)  | 8 Langelsheim (25 km),<br>Rammelsberg (16 km) |





to Ilsenburg  
to Bad Harzburg

Hirtenstieg

9 National Park Visitor Centre Brockenhaus



8

Brocken Railway

7



Cloud Hut



10

Circular Walk

6

5

Railway Station



Highest Point

11

Devil's Pulpit

4

1

Brocken Garden

2

3

Goetheweg

Brocken Street

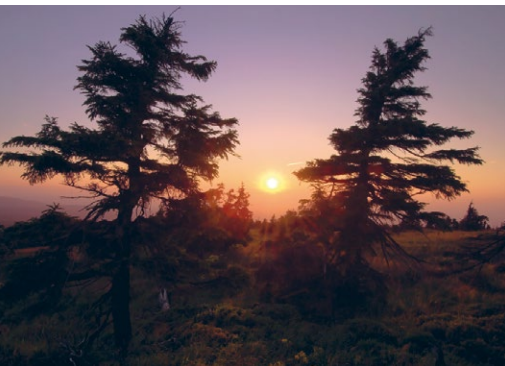
to Torfhaus

to Schierke



## 6 Harz National Park – legendary mountain wilderness

We associate the term „National Park“ with exotic animals and immense rainforests in Africa or America. And indeed the national park idea comes from America where, in 1872, Yellowstone National Park became the first of its kind to protect its natural beauty. Since then about 5,000 precious natural landscapes worldwide have been protected with this highest distinction. In 1990 approximately 60 km<sup>2</sup> of Saxony-Anhalt was given National Park status – Harz National Park with the Brocken. When looking to the west from board 6 you can see the TV towers on Torfhaus. Here is the approximately 158 km<sup>2</sup> Lower Saxony Harz National Park, added in 1994. With an 89 km<sup>2</sup> extension of the Upper Harz National Park in 2001 and the merger of the two Parks in 2006, we have today's Harz National Park, at approximately 247 km<sup>2</sup>.



Many rare animal and plant species live in the mountain spruce, beech and mixed deciduous forests, the bogs, mountain streams, granite cliffs, and the dwarf shrub heath of the National Park.

The most pristine habitats are protected in natural dynamics zone. Here no intervention takes place. In the natural development zone there are areas of spruce that were once planted for forestry purposes; these are now being turned back into natural forest by adding deciduous trees and opening them up to more light. These human activities will continue for some years. The Brocken summit itself is in the utilization zone of the National Park.

The aim of the Harz National Park is to stop human intervention in at least 75% of the National Park, in accordance with the motto „let nature be nature“.

## 7 Natural forest line

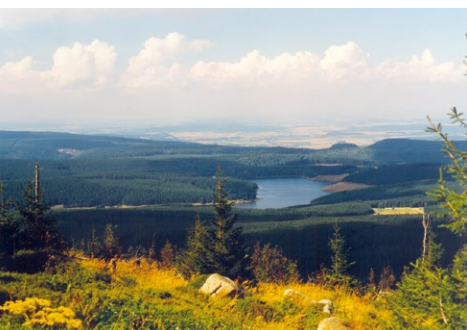
The closed spruce forest on the Brocken has a natural forest line at about 1,100 metres above sea level. This northernmost natural forest line in Central Europe is particularly valuable for nature conservation. It is caused by the special climatic conditions here on the highest Harz mountain. Among the limiting factors the wind is especially important, preventing the creation of a closed forest on Brocken plateau and so creating space for the dwarf shrub heath.

As the windiest place in Germany (on 24.11.1984 a wind speed of 263 km/h was measured), the Brocken is the only naturally forest-free part of the central German uplands. The climatic conditions (approximately 4°C mean annual temperature, 1,800 mm annual rainfall and about 300 foggy days) and the ecological conditions at 1,141 metres on the Brocken are comparable to those at about 2,000 metres above sea level in the Alps. The reason for this is the exposed, northern location of the Harz. The mountain stands as an insurmountable obstacle in the North German Plain. Therefore, it is always exposed to the winds and storms which predominantly transport humid air masses from the southwest.



## 8 Hirtenstieg / Heinrich Heine Way

Coming from the north you can reach the Brocken on the Hirtenstieg (following the same course as the Harz border path along the Green Belt). Alongside the Brocken Street and the Eckerloch Stieg from the southeast and the Goetheweg from the west, it is the only access for walkers to the Brocken plateau. For 3.4 km it follows a partly concrete-paved former



patrol road to Scharfenstein Ranger Station, which is a popular hiking destination with its daily-open rest hut. On 20 September 1824 the poet Heinrich Heine hiked from Harzburg to the

Brocken. The descent continued to Ilsenburg in the north. In his honour, the name Heinrich Heine Way is also used for the Hirtenstieg, which was possibly previously used by shepherds driving their livestock to pasture on the Brocken. The ascent from Ilsenburg onto the Brocken is considered the most beautiful.

Heine transformed his impressions of the ascent into words in his „Harz Journey“: „The higher we ascend, so much the shorter and more dwarf-like do the fir-trees become, shrinking up, as it were, within themselves, until finally only whortleberries, bilberries, and mountain herbs remain. It is also sensibly colder. ... for it is a road which is to the last degree exhausting, and I was glad enough when I at last beheld the long-desired Brocken house.“

You can visit the new Brockenhaus if you climb the stairs to the entrance on board 9. There you will find a modern exhibition on the subjects of geopark, witches, German history, famous Brocken visitors and nature in the National Park. In addition, there is a multi-media show and a cafeteria for you.

## 9 Boulder field

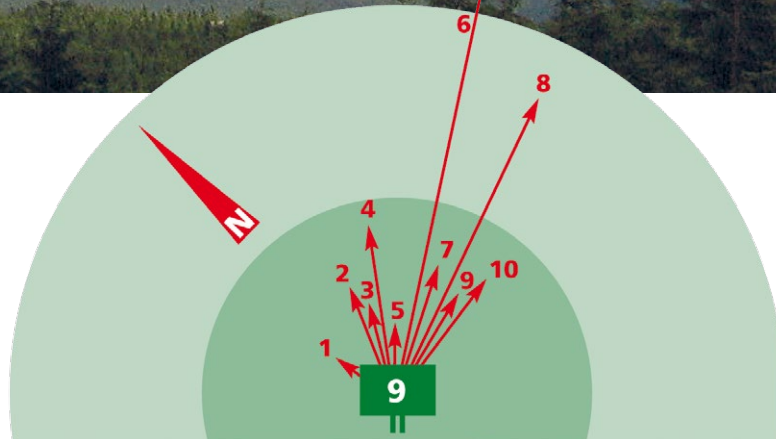
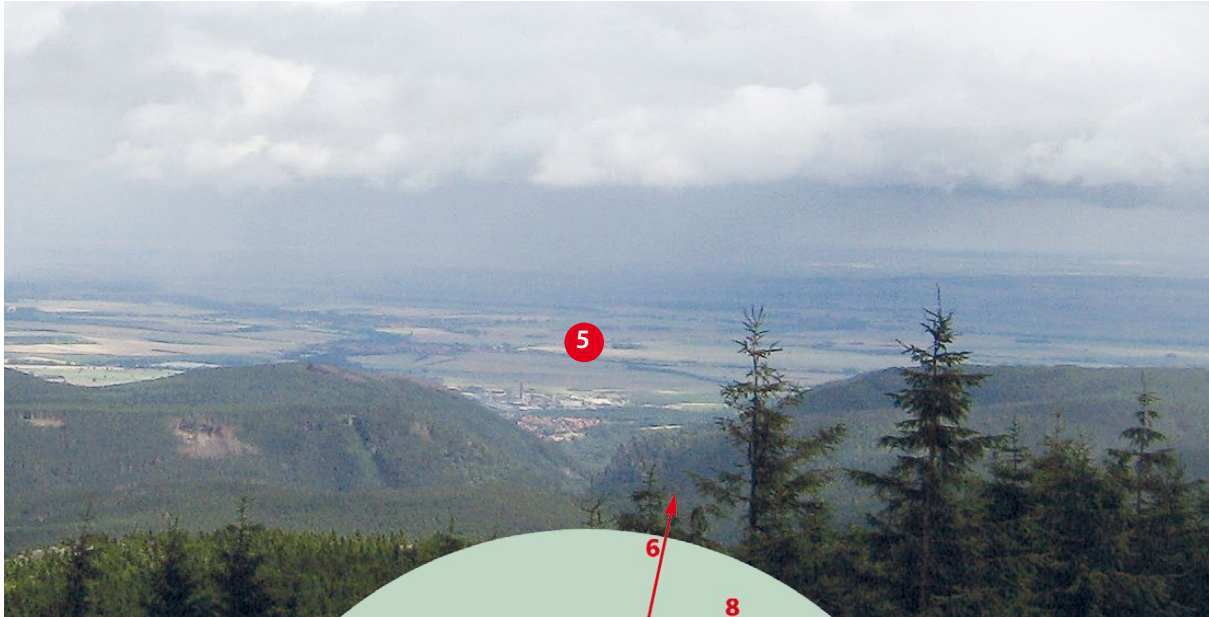
The geological history of the Brocken area reaches far back into the Paleozoic. In the Devonian, where the Upper Harz today lies, sediments were deposited in a primordial sea. About 300 million years ago, in the Carboniferous, these were folded by plate tectonics into the ancient Harz. Then hot magma from the deeper regions of the earth rose up; however, it did not reach the surface but cooled slowly at a depth of more than 2,000 metres. The result is a so-called pluton, consisting of coarse-grained granite which is composed of the minerals feldspar, quartz and mica.

With the magma pushing upward, the surrounding rocks undergo contact metamorphism at almost 1,000 °C and transform into hard and splintery hornfels. For almost 100 million years ago, during the Cretaceous and the Tertiary, the entire Harz was lifted as what is known as a 'half-horse' during alpidic orogeny. This 'horse' rises uniformly from the south and is cut off in the north. At the same time erosion increased on the surface. The granite was exposed and the Brocken literally etched into the relief from the Harz plateau. The granite itself was weathered into shape by the so-called woolsack weathering. The resulting cliffs crumbled into boulder fields and are found everywhere in the Harz, especially here on the Brocken. They are home to many rare lichens, club mosses and mosses; therefore they may not be accessed.

The boulder fields are a designated „National Geotope“ within the National GeoPark „Harz Braunschweiger Land Ostfalen“.







- |   |                               |    |   |
|---|-------------------------------|----|---|
| 1 | Bad Harzburg (10 km)          | 6  | Tangermünde (124 km)                      |
| 2 | Großer Fallstein (25 km)      | 7  | Huy, Huysburg (32 km)                     |
| 3 | Osterwieck (20 km)            | 8  | Magdeburg (79 km)                         |
| 4 | Schöppenstedt/<br>Elm (40 km) | 9  | Derenburg (22 km),<br>Wernigerode (13 km) |
| 5 | Ilseburg (9 km)               | 10 | Halberstadt (32 km)                       |



## 10 Bog

Bogs are very sensitive habitats in which numerous specialists of the plant and animal kingdom are at home. Small-scale slope bogs, as at this location, are spread in a mosaic among the mountain spruce forest of the Brocken. Slope bogs are mostly young, always lying on slopes, and relatively low nutrient, acidic ground water flowing through them. A water confining ground layer at a shallow depth (here the granite) and large amounts of precipitation are the conditions for their creation. Particularly striking are the white seed heads of common cottongrass in summer. On closer inspection one can also recognize cranberry, bog bilberry, bog rosemary and crowberry that occur in drier areas such as the edges of the slope bog. Particularly difficult to discover is the round-leaved sundew which is hiding among the sphagnum moss. In intact bogs the main plant species are sphagnum mosses, which have an enormous water storage capacity. There are about 25 different species of them in the Harz Mountains.

In the National Park the bogs are growing even today. For their protection it is particularly important to only walk on the signposted paths.

## 11 Building development on the Brocken

The history of the Brocken is particularly reflected in its building development. Erected in 1736, for a long time Clouds Hut was the only shelter for tired walkers. In 1800, the first inn came into operation on the summit, and thus the tradition of the Brocken hosts began, and an observation tower was built. The inn was gradually converted into the Brocken Hotel, but this was destroyed by a US air strike in 1945. In addition to Brocken Garden, founded in 1890, the Brocken summit is home to the oldest German weather station (1895) and one of the first television towers in Germany (1938). The proportion of built-up area grew continuously to its 1990 level. Thus the sealed area increased from 120 m<sup>2</sup> in 1800 to 53,000 m<sup>2</sup>.

In terms of buildings, there was a 3.60-metre-high concrete wall around the Brocken and in particular the limestone rubble from the roads and barrack areas, of which about 20,000 t was removed in 1990.

With the establishment of the National Park and its programme for the restoration of the Brocken, the constructed area was reduced to about 10,000 m<sup>2</sup>. The Brocken wall and military barracks have been removed and the Brocken flora has taken hold again.

At the highest point of the mountain you will find the „Brockenuhr“, a 30 m in diameter ring consisting of 48 bronze signs around a rock made of six granite boulders.



## Your route to the Brocken

Walkers can reach the Brocken on three main routes. They differ in the length, but also in the ascent to be overcome. You should make sure you are in good physical condition and you have sturdy footwear as well as weatherproof clothing; the summit is a few degrees colder than at the starting point of your hike and the weather can suddenly change.

Distances are indicated in kilometres in each direction on the paths.

### The shortest route:

From Schierke via Eckerloch to Brocken

About 5 km / approx 500 metres of ascent

Even though the route via Eckerloch is the shortest route to the Brocken, it still requires that walkers are in good physical



condition and have especially good shoes, because the road is sometimes steep, rocky and covered with roots. Information about alternative routes from Schierke to Brocken is available at the starting

point of the walk, Schierke National Park House.

Starting point, further information, walk leaflet:

Schierke National Park House on Brocken Street, Tel. 03 94 55 / 4 77

### The least ascent:

From Torfhaus to Brocken on the Goetheweg

About 9 km / about 360 metres of ascent

Even Johann Wolfgang Goethe started his first ascent of Brocken in Torfhaus in December 1777. Which route he then embarked on through the rough terrain and deep snow, we cannot

say exactly. Today, the path leads past the Great Torfhausmoor along Abbegrabens, crosses the „Green Belt“ at Eckersprung, then follows a newly built section of the Brocken Railway. The final climb to the summit is via Brocken Street.

Starting point, further information, walk leaflet:

TorfHaus National Park Visitor Centre at the large car park in Torfhaus, Tel. 0 53 20/33 17 90, [www.torfhaus.info](http://www.torfhaus.info)

### Only for well trained hikers:

From Ilsenburg to the Brocken on the Heinrich Heine Way

About 10 km / about 860 metres of ascent

Heinrich Heine wandered down this route in 1824 from the Brocken; he climbed from Bad Harzburg and spent the night on the Brocken. Today, you also first of all follow the romantic valley of the Ilse from Ilsenburg. Passing the Bremer Hut and Stempelsbuche you finally get to the Hirtenstieg. On this the steepest part of the path the gradient is sometimes up to 20%, following the old paved path of the GDR Border Troops to reach the summit of Brocken.

Starting point, further information:

Ilsetal National Park House near the large car park at the bottom of Ilsetal, Tel. 03 94 52 / 8 94 94





## Welcome to Brockenhaus

Awaiting you are three exciting floors of exhibition space and the climb into our dome right up to the roof terrace!

Start your journey through the diversity of the mountain with the virtual flight as a witch and let us take you into the world of myths and legends. Experience the exciting stories of famous Brocken visitors who have written about Brocken history for over two hundred years. Join Hermann Löns with his ride on his Harz narrow gauge railway. Marvel at the tourist infrastructure on the Brocken which was already well-developed in the early twentieth century. Explore the development of the restricted military area around the Brocken and the construction of Brocken fortress at the height of the Cold War. The fascinating insights into the large and small wonders of the Harz National Park have their own dedicated floor in the House. Here you can learn all about the history, flora and fauna and the many special features of the Harz National Park. Germany's only trans-state National Park has a lot of exciting stories about his fascinating habitats for you. Flowing waters, mountain spruce forests and boulder piles present their residents and their living habits.

The newest section of the exhibition in Brockenhaus is dedicated to the signs of climate change in the Harz. Here you can understand – sometimes even touch – what climate change

means for the Harz forest in the course of the Earth's history. And what would the Brocken be without its climatic characteristics and the typical Brocken weather conditions? Everything about the weather extremes of the mountain – the wind, the fog and the snow, as well as its weather records – can be found on our third floor.

German radio and television history was made on the Brocken. In Brockenhaus you can learn interesting facts from the early days of motion pictures and can have a look at one of the oldest TV towers in Germany.

Before being served in our cosy Hexenflug cafeteria, do not miss the spiral staircase to get into our dome. Here you can see the imposing antennas and parabolic mirrors which the GDR Ministry of State Security used for bugging Western radio traffic at the height of the Cold War. Radiotelephones of leading politicians were the focus of the monitoring service on the Brocken, and with the latest technology they were in a position to even intercept calls from across the English Channel.

*BROCKENHAUS A*

### Opening hours:

Daily 9.30 – 17.00

### Entrance fees (as of April 2018):

Adults € 5.00 (discounts for children, seniors, groups and families)

Do you have a HarzCard? Then you have free entry to Brockenhaus.

Tel. 039455 50005

Brockenhaus@t-online.de

[www.nationalpark-Brockenhaus.de](http://www.nationalpark-Brockenhaus.de)



# Regulations

Due to several million visitors each year, some basic rules for this nature paradise have to be set in order to guarantee that others will be able to enjoy the unimpaired mountain wilderness in the future. Please visit one of our information centres in order to obtain detailed information on this matter. Please note that we consider major violations against the National Park's rules as an offence which will be punished accordingly.



More than 1,000 bags of litter have to be collected each year alongside the routes in the National Park. Please use the rubbish and recycling bins at the end of your trip.



Do not remove anything from the Park. Each animal and each plant has its place in the nutrient cycle of the nature reserve. This particularly applies to berries and mushrooms.



Do not light fires in the National Park! Fire will spread rapidly even in colder weather conditions. Each year precious areas are destroyed by fire.



Please keep your dog on a leash. Your loyal companion may be tempted if it smells a young deer or lynx. Spare the animals the stress and your dog the danger of disappearing in a deep granite chasm.



In order to avoid forest fires, please do not smoke in the Park between 15 February and 31 October.



There are access laws in the National Park. Please stay on the sign-posted routes. The Park has 560 kilometres of these routes, which lead to the most fascinating lookout points.



Cycling is allowed on all paths. On a few paths it is restricted. Please note: hikers have priority.



Horse-riding is permitted only on select routes.

## Imprint

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