



Who says money doesn't grow on trees?

Forests have always been essential for mankind – they provide shade, food and shelter. Wood is a sustainable fuel. It can also be used for building and furniture-making. According to deutschland.de, an information portal provided by Fazit Communication GmbH in cooperation with the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin, 76 million cubic metres of wood are harvested annually in Germany, and 1.1 million jobs are bound up with the forest and wood sector.

by Ming Wong

For peace and quiet, art and poetry

Forests also contribute greatly to the travel and recreation industries. Countries with beautiful forests attract nature lovers. Poets and artists have always been inspired by their beauty and mysteries. Where would the fairy tales of the Grimm brothers be without forests as their mystical settings? A more modern note is struck by Peter Wohlleben, a German forester who wrote the bestselling book *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate* (Das geheime Leben der Bäume).

During the pandemic years, Germans took to their forests in huge numbers. There were walking groups, walking weekends and forest retreats. The Japanese habit of 'forest bathing' became quite a trend in this country. You can go jogging, mountain-biking, birdwatching, herb and mushroom foraging or even attend church services or concerts in the forests. They've also become final resting places as forest burials grow in popularity. Indeed, forests are a critical factor for public and mental health.

As an investment for the future

Despite the population of 82 million people and a high density of towns and cities, German forests are still in plentiful supply. According to deutschland.de, there are 90 billion trees, almost 80 tree species and around 1,200 plant species in German forests. Thirty-three per cent of the country's land area is covered in forests or woodlands, half of which is state-owned.

It is still possible to buy and invest in forests. The cost of a forest depends on many things: its location, size, composition of tree species and their age, and the biomass reserve. The price per hectare can vary between €10,000 for a dying spruce plantation and up to €60,000 for an old deciduous forest with a high biomass reserve. A young forest is going to be a slow investment because trees take time to grow. Germany's softwood log and lumber exports made over €2.5 billion in 2020, reports Woods Resource Quarterly. The largest market for logs exported from Germany, surg-ing from almost non-existent in 2017 to account for just over 65% of the total export value in 2020, is China. Other significant export destinations are Austria (14% of total export value) and Belgium (5%).





Get a job working in the woods

There are many jobs that are forest-related, e.g. lumberjacks, botanists, foresters, geographers, ecologists, nature educators and recreation and events organisers. German universities offer degree programmes that cover forest management, timber harvesting and marketing, logistics, silviculture and soil and climate science. After completing their studies, graduates can work in the management of a forest district, for wood processing companies or in associations or environmental education centres engaged in nature conservation and landscape management.

Forests help us manage the climate

But of course, the most important value of the forests is the part they play in regulating climate. According to Deutschland.de, not only do German forests relieve the atmosphere of 127 million tons of CO₂ every year, but they also produce 25 to 38 million tons of oxygen or about one to one and a half times the amount that Germany's residents need to breathe each year. While forests do naturally become diseased, e.g. through beetle infestation, or destroyed by storms, climate change can increase the scale of such phenomena. Naturalists and scientists are at pains to remind the public that the state of our forests cannot be taken for granted. Not surprisingly, many institutions and associations exist to protect forests and to promote forest education among the public, such as the Schutzgemeinschaft Deutscher Wald (<https://www.sdw.de>) or the German Forest Protection Association.



Vokabeltraining

to be at pains to do sth.
sich bemühen, etw. zu tun

deciduous forest
Laubwald

foraging
Nahrungssuche

lumberjacks
Holzfäller

silviculture
Forstwirtschaft

