

From Poling to Punting

Festivals and Traditions by the Water in Southwest Germany

STUTTGART – Water has always exerted a magical attraction on people and provides material for legends, myths and rituals. The cleaning, decorating and blessing of wells and springs is still widespread today in many communities in Baden-Württemberg. But there are many other customs, traditions and festivals in Southwest Germany related to water.

Salting and Shooting: Kuchen- und Brunnenfest in Schwäbisch Hall

The history of the salters from Schwäbisch Hall goes back a long way. The Celts were already extracting salt from the spring at the Kocher River. In the Middle Ages, trade in 'white gold' brought great wealth to Schwäbisch Hall. The salters' festival, which probably has its roots in the cleaning of the salt spring, dates back to this time. The hard work was rewarded with the celebrations. Today, the Kuchen- und Brunnenfest (Cake and Spring Festival) is celebrated in honor of the salt boiling industry and is considered one of the most beautiful local festivals in Southwest Germany. It traditionally ends with a gun salute.

schwaebischhall.de/en/tourism/festivals-and-celebrations

Turning and Grinding: Deutscher Mühlentag

Every year on Whit Monday, water wheels turn all over Germany for 'Deutscher Mühlentag' or German Mill Day. The aim is to remind people of the importance of the miller's trade. In Baden-Württemberg, many old mills resume operations on this day and open their doors to visitors. The Stuttgart Region offers plenty of opportunities for a mill excursion: from the Siebenmühlental Valley on the edge of the Schönbuch Nature Reserve to the Mill Hiking Trail in the Swabian Forest and the popular Glemsmühlenweg Cycle Trail. In Upper Swabia, the Mühlenstrasse Route with its over 100 mills is worth a visit.

komoot.com/tour/oberschwaben-tourismus.de/en

Fighting and Punting: Tübingen Punt Race

"The pole stays with the man:" anyone who doesn't stick to this motto will follow the wooden punt pole into the Neckar River. This has been the case at least since the student associations took over Tübingen's punting boats. Previously, it was mainly Neckar fishermen who used the flat-bottomed boats. To this day, most of the more than 100 punting boats are owned by student associations, but there are also specially licensed 'punters' who take guests out on the Neckar River. The boats rarely get in each other's way. Only when the annual punting race around the Neckar Island takes place on Corpus Christi, the river gets crowded. The costumed race is not exactly for the squeamish as beer awaits the winning team and half a litre of cod liver oil awaits the losers.

tuebingen-info.de/veranstaltungen

Bathing and Balancing: Ulm Oath Week

On the penultimate Monday in July, Ulm is in a state of emergency. This is due to an 14th-century oath, by which the mayor solemnly pledges every year on Oath Monday ('Schwörmontag') to stand up for both rich and poor. This is followed by the "Nabada," where which citizens and dignitaries float down the Danube in rubber dinghies, rafts and flatboats known as 'Ulmer Schachteln' (Ulm boxes). Every four years, the historically documented fishermen's joust also takes place during the 'Schwörwoche'. Standing on the stern of the boat, the contestants aim the leather-covered tips of their spears at their opponent's chest. The one who remains standing wins. Anyone who falls into the water or steps into the boat is considered 'wet' and is eliminated. The Serenade of Lights has also been part of the festival week since 1967. Around 12,000 floating candles are placed on the water from the "Ulm Boxes" and transform the Danube into a sea of lights. tourismus.ulm.de/en/discover/events

Cracking Jokes and Posing: Schramberg's 'Da-Bach-na-Fahrt'

'Drunk as a lord', 'soaking wet', and 'dry as dust'. These are the battle cries you need to master when visiting Schramberg on Rose Monday. Otherwise, watching the 'Bach-na-Fahrt' is only half as much fun. The parade of the teams with their decorated wooden tubs through the town centre is followed by the big spectacle on the Schiltach River. The approximately 500 metre long stretch of water, with its limited width and height and treacherous rapids, presents a number of difficulties for people and equipment. Participants have three weeks to prepare and design the tub assigned to them by lot for the adventurous river trip. By the time they reach the finish line, it will be clear who has mastered their craft, or who will be punished for having two left hands. schwarzwald-tourismus.info/veranstaltungen/da-bach-na-fahrt

Towing and Punting: Black Forest Rafting

Rafting has a centuries-old tradition and has been part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage since December 2022. Up until the 19th century, thousands of fir trees were transported on the streams and rivers in the Black Forest and were floated to the Netherlands via the Rhine. In the Kinzigtal Valley and Nagoldtal Valley, the tradition is still alive and can be experienced in museums, on themed hiking trails, and at festivals. The International Rafting Festival at the 'Monhardter Wasserstube', a historic facility of the raftsmen's guild in Altensteig, offers a glimpse into historic forestry jobs and crafts such as 'Wiedendrehen'. Members of the Upper Nagoldtal Valley Raftsmen's Guild demonstrate their skills during a trip down the Wasserstube's 'water alley'. schwarzwald-tourismus.info/schwarzwald/regionen/kinzigtal

Rowing and Praying: Allensbach Lake Procession

Every child knows St. Nicholas. But few people today know that he is also the patron saint of sailors. A small church was dedicated to the martyr in Allensbach at Lake Constance around 1300. As the parish belonged to the Reichenau Monastery, the faithful still had to continue by boat across Lake Gnadensee to St. Peter and Paul

Church in Niederzell to attend Mass and on feast days Today, on the first Sunday in July, the lake procession leads to St. Mary and Mark Minster in Mittelzell, but it still serves as a reminder that Allensbach and Reichenau Island belong together. The theological significance of the ceremony has been enhanced by linking it to the religious custom of venerating the relic of the Holy Blood. Since the 1970s, it has been exhibited in the minster on the occasion of the Allensbach Lake Procession.

bodensee.eu/en

A digital version of this press release - as well as more detailed information on Southwest Germany - is available on our website <https://www.tourism-bw.com/press>

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