

Süden



The Travel Magazine
for SouthWest Germany

Natural highs

Mystical mountains
in the Murg valley

Natural reboot

Hike the Swabian Alb
meditation trails

Natural wellness

Salt-water spas, thermal
baths: wellness holidays
in Bad Dürkheim



THE SUNNY
SIDE OF
GERMANY.

BADEN-
WÜRTTEMBERG

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Time to yourself
The Meditation Trail on the Ehinger Alb gives hikers new insights and ideas



Welcome to SouthWest Germany

The world turns faster and faster; we always have to be in touch. That's why we need to get the most out of a holiday, by slowing down and refreshing both body and soul. This edition of our annual magazine is dedicated to relaxation in sunny SouthWest Germany. Tips range from quiet spots off the beaten track, unspoiled countryside and spiritual hikes to health-oriented breaks, slow food and organic regional produce. We suggest relaxing places to stay and how to unwind. We hope you enjoy reading Süden – and then planning your visit!

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RELAX IN SOUTHWEST GERMANY

Slow down. Switch off. Here are some holiday ideas offering peace and quiet

Peace of mind and body

The more frantic your everyday life, the more you need – and benefit from – a change of pace on holiday. The choice is yours: wellness breaks, with natural remedies; staying in a pretty village; eating and drinking with local producers; hiking along an old pilgrimage trail; taking flight, soaring high in a hot air balloon. These are all authentic experiences and they are as relaxing as a siesta in a hammock. So, kick back and let go. Holidays generate energy. And so do happy memories.



Special tip

CITTASLOW

Cittaslow is an international network of towns that value the quality of life. SouthWest Germany's members include Bad Schussenried, Bad Wimpfen, Schwetzingen, Überlingen and Waldkirch.

Ancient stones, ancient tales

German author and poet Johann Peter Hebel once wrote: "Belchen Mountain is the first stop between heaven and earth." At 1,414 m/4,600 ft, this smooth, massive hump of rock is the fourth highest point in the Black Forest, with great views over the forest itself and into the Rhine Valley. But as far back as Celtic times, the Belchen has been ascribed mystical powers. In the Celtic language, it was called "the radiant one".

One of several mysterious granite domes in the Black Forest (see page 22), it retains a very special, calm aura, best enjoyed on an easy hike. Located south of Freiburg, near Münstertal.



Special tip

FUN FOR ALL

With its impressive and unusual rock formations, Kandel Mountain rears high above the village of Waldkirch, northeast of Freiburg.

Popular with hikers, cyclists, climbers and paragliders, this mountain provides fun for all ages.



Celestial flowers

In Schwetzingen Palace Gardens, northwest of Stuttgart, the Japanese ornamental cherry trees bloom in March-April. The trunks may be gnarled and mossy, but the overarching blossom is fluffy and pink. So, walking along the tree-lined avenues is like walking under a pink sky.

Originally, this area was a kitchen garden, growing fruit and vegetables for the court of the 18th-century Prince Elector, Carl Theodor. Then, in the 1960s, Japanese ornamental cherry trees were planted. Come here to refresh your mind and feel the approach of spring.



Special tip

WHEN TO VISIT

The annual cherry blossom is a brief, moveable show. To know when the gardens are at their peak, check the website's 'flower barometer':

schloesser-und-gaerten.de/en/home

A royal treat

In SouthWest Germany, going to spas and thermal baths can be a special treat as much as a treatment. Take Bad Wildbad's Palais Thermal. Some 150 years ago, the Duke of Württemberg commissioned a Greek-style classical bathhouse to be built right on top of the thermal spring in the town, an hour west of Stuttgart. With its romantic architecture, Bad Wildbad soon became one of Germany's most popular spa destinations. Fame brought expansion, with pools, columns, arches and fountains in Moorish and Art Nouveau styles. Taking the waters here became as much about the experience as the curative benefits of the mineral-rich spring.



Special tip

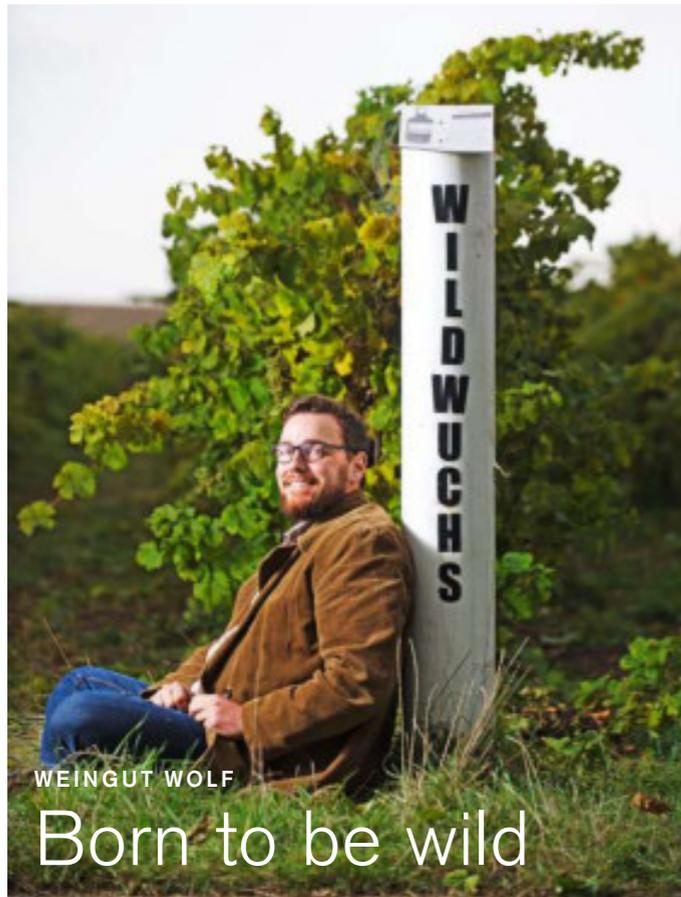
SO MANY CHOICES

Against this glamorous backdrop, today's guests can now choose between whirlpools, massage and pools, Finnish saunas, a Roman-style steam bath and wellness treatments. Try a soap brush massage or water shiatsu therapy!
bad-wildbad.eu



Take it easy

According to the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, the greatest events are not at the noisiest times, but at the quietest. Here are some tips for peaceful, relaxed and enjoyable breaks



WEINGUT WOLF

Born to be wild

Brackenheim, near Heilbronn, is Württemberg's largest wine-growing community. The landscape is criss-crossed with geometric lines of vines, all meticulously pruned. By contrast, Lothar Wolf's vineyard looks like a jungle. Here, the old vines are allowed to grow almost untouched by secateurs. The only pruning is done by the sheep that use the vineyard as their pasture. But this unusual style of viticulture makes sense, giving the grapes great depth of flavour and distinctive character to create excellent wines. weingutwolf.de

HERITAGE CENTRAL

The Good Old Days

How are plant and animal varieties bred? Why are some in danger of extinction? What is a gene bank and why are traditional varieties important for our future? The open-air museum Erlebnis.Genuss.Zentrum in Beuren, an hour southeast of Stuttgart is all about preserving heritage varieties of fruit, vegetables and grains. And out in the fields, rare heritage breeds of domestic animals are reared. Regular events include tastings, cookery courses and gardening workshops. freilichtmuseum-beuren.de



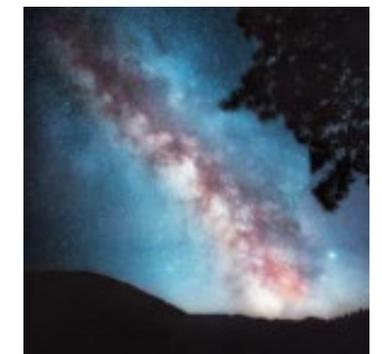
HOLIDAY MEDLEY



MARVEL AT THE STARS

It is getting harder and harder to enjoy the marvels of the night sky, especially in big cities. Luckily, many regions of SouthWest Germany do not suffer from light pollution, so the stars can shine in all their glory. One example is the Swabian Alb Star Park, a region southeast of Stuttgart. In Heilbronn, the roof of the Experimenta science centre boasts one of the world's largest telescopic domes (photo above), offering spectacular views of the night sky. In Stuttgart, the Carl

Zeiss Planetarium explains the beauty of the solar system. But across the region, there are special events held at night. In Upper Swabia, the Berggasthof H"ochsten inn hosts "full moon buffets" in summer, with a campfire, storytelling and stargazing. Summer also brings shooting stars. On the Feldberg Mountain in the Black Forest, astronomers invite you to watch the phenomenon through their telescopes – and, of course to make a wish!



In the Black Forest, the Milky Way shines clearly



EUROPA-PARK
Theme park wellness

Let's face it: Europa-Park is famous for thrill rides and entertainment, right? Well, yes – but this theme park in Rust also offers ways to slow down and recharge your batteries. In the park's six themed hotels, you can chill out after an exciting day. Choose from numerous saunas, steam baths, massages, quiet areas, outdoor pools and solariums. New: in the Rulantica indoor water park, Hyggedal is a 1,000-sq-m / 10,000-sq-ft relaxation and sauna area above the Lumälunda restaurant. europapark.de/en



BADER ALM

HOP IN THE TUB

In India, a saying goes: "From time to time, we have to stop and take a break and wait for our souls to catch up with us again." The Bergdorf Bader Alm inn, near Freudenstadt in the Black Forest, follows that thinking, with an unusual break from the daily routine. You spend the night in rustic rooms, then take herbal treatments outdoors in wooden tubs, in meadows higher up the mountain. Wearing old-fashioned swimwear, you can have massages and peeling. "Up here there are no worries," says Fritz Bader, who bought the 17th-century farm on a whim, several years ago. "All you hear is water splashing, birds twittering and the wind in the trees." The outdoor bathing experience is like stepping back in time: staff wear retro clothing; a vintage car takes you up to the alpine meadow. bergdorf-bader-alm.de



NEW ALBCARD GUEST CARD
Great experiences included

With the new AlbCard, holidaymakers in the Swabian Alb can enjoy FREE entry to 130 attractions, from thermal baths and pools to palaces, castles and museums. Even canoe trips and bike rental are free. On checking in at one of the 140 participating hotels, guesthouses and B&Bs, guests receive a complimentary guest card. All journeys on public transport are also free during their holiday. schwaebischealb.de/albcard



*A treat for
all your senses*

Nestled to the north of Germany's stunningly beautiful Black Forest lies the small and impressively cosmopolitan city of Baden-Baden. The perfect destination for escaping from the mundanity of modern life, this city offers everything necessary for a relaxing break to recharge your batteries.

The very embodiment of recreation can be found at the city's two thermal baths, where the healing properties of the warm, natural thermal water combine with a range of high-quality beauty treatments that luxuriate the skin. The modern Caracalla Spa with more than 43,000 sq. ft. of bathing and wellness space, creates an exceptional ambiance for gentle relaxation in the thermal water. The historic Friedrichsbad looking back on more than 140 years of bathing history, brings traditional Roman bathing culture and Irish hot-air bathing into the modern day.

*"After ten minutes you forget time,
after 20 minutes, you forget the world."*

Mark Twain, about Friedrichsbad

Far from the pollution of metropolitan and industrial cities, Baden-Baden is a heaven of tranquillity where nature takes the limelight. Strolling through the Lichtentaler Allee, watching lovely sunsets on the Merkur Mountain or exploring the Panorama Trail, is just a small fraction of countless natural jewels Baden-Baden holds. The city is a truly enchanting place, exuding recreation and wellbeing at every turn - for every piece of modern luxury, you will find an equally charming reminder of the city's ancient culture.

www.baden-baden.com



BADEN-BADEN

The good-good life.

The goats are loose!

Holidays in the countryside are special. Ask any child!
And in villages, such as Lossburg, in the Black Forest,
you will enjoy a warm welcome, meet local farmers
and take in the Great Outdoors. Perfect for families!

✎ CHRISTIANE WÜRTEMBERGER ✎ OLIVER RAATZ



Goats from the KultierHof love to join you on walks

Benedikt carefully reaches for an egg in the mobile chicken coop, fishes it out and puts it in the box. "Look, there's another one over there," he calls out to Carla Staiger. With a group of like-minded people, she runs a big old farm here in Lossburg-Schömberg, in the Black Forest. Benedikt's little sister, Lina, stays in Mummy's arms, but is allowed to stroke a chicken. "Very soft," she says, with a laugh. Having made their purchases in the farm shop, the family is now getting a free tour. The little ones are delighted: they can feed the Swabian-Hällisch pigs and visit the hens in the field.

Children can play in the brook that runs into Kinzigsee lake

Lossburg, south of Freudenstadt, is a secluded village in the River Kinzig valley. It is one of 21 communities that have come together to create Dorfurlaub im Schwarzwald (Black Forest Village Holidays). The idea is simple: guests are invited to take part in

village life. They stay with locals and get to know the traditions. They meet farmers, chat to food producers and explore the countryside. Children make friends with other youngsters and they love having the freedom to roam.

We meet up with Benedikt and Lina's parents, who wanted their children to have an experience that was completely different from their usual home life. And, for themselves, they fancied some greenery, home-grown produce and a relaxed, carefree break. After seeing the farm, the children have taken off their shoes and are exploring the water adventure tour in the fairy-tale setting around nearby Kinzigsee lake. This is a nature adventure trail around the stream that is the source of the River Kinzig. A little further on, there is a station, where you can have a go with the fun super sprayers and water pistols and a spot where little ones can play safely by the stream. Benedikt clammers along the shady waterside; Lina is happy to sit and throw stones into the brook.



We make cheese with Black Forest flavours, such as spruce tips."

Cornelia Reich, Schwenkenhof



Playing in the river bed near Kinzigsee lake

Tasting organic cheeses in Conni's factory



Mühlenweiher pond in Bätzweiler, a quiet community that is part of Lossburg



On Fridays, the Hofcafé is open and serves homemade cakes.”

Carla Staiger, Hofbauernhof

Lunch is a picnic with local goodies from Lossburger’s Vesperdäschle (picnic stall). Then, they all climb up the Vogteiturm tower, an impressive scenic lookout. The children are excited; the parents love the view.

At the KulTierHof, a farm dating back to the 18th century, owner Esther Föttinger calls out to her protégés: “Come on Toff, come on Frida.” And, after a moment, they happily run after her, ready for a walk. No, these are not horses; they are high-spirited goats! Esther explains that her father’s purchase of the farm a few years ago enabled her to fulfil a childhood dream of looking after animals. “Goats are such emphatic creatures,” she says, “I’ve always wanted to have some.” Here in Betzweiler-Wälde near Lossburg, the goats are neither slaughtered nor milked. Their only duty seems to be going for a walk with visitors through the village and the forest.

It is now time for Lina and Benedikt to be collected by their grandparents, who came with them on holiday. But the younger generation want to do more; they want to go to Conni’s cheese factory on the Schwenkenhof farm. While they watch the cows, the adults can taste the or-



Feeding the pigs at the Hofbauernhof

ganic cheese. And, while the children are busy and happy, the parents can hike the Mühlenwelt am Heimbach, a watermill-themed trail that has 13 stops along the way. They are accompanied by Karl-Heinz Mäder, whose ancestors operated saw mills in the Black Forest valley.

He tells tales of the past, such as how locals would drink at the “Linde” tavern while the communal sawmill cut their wood. And he talks about the present. Which is the most beautiful hiking trail? Where is the best place to eat the finest local produce? (The answer is the Oberen Mühle). And he enjoys starting up the old machinery in his barn. He heaves a spruce trunk towards the saw; the blades whine as they get faster, cutting the tree into planks. “It still

works well today,” says Karl-Heinz, as he adjusts something. “I’ll stay until the work is finished; I’ll have a glass of wine later.” This, too, is part of a village holiday – meeting skilled craftsmen, who keep traditions alive. ■



More information

Village holidays: [schwarzwald-tourismus.info/schwarzwald/dorfurlaub](https://www.schwarzwald-tourismus.info/schwarzwald/dorfurlaub)

The Black Forest: [schwarzwald-tourismus.info](https://www.schwarzwald-tourismus.info)

Three more village holidays in the Black Forest

Seebach: hike to the Mummelsee lake

The village of Seebach is like a fairy-tale, set on the shore of Mummelsee lake, which is home to the Mümmlein water spirits. Or so the legend goes. Hikers reach the lake via the Grindenpfad trail. Other holiday experiences include the Hornisgrinde observation tower, the Silbergründle ore mine and the Deckerhof mill.



The mysterious Mummelsee near Hornisgründe mountain

Schönwald: home of the cuckoo clock

In the early 1730s, the world’s first cuckoo clock was made in Schönwald. Here, the long-established craft tradition is celebrated in the Reinertonishof heritage museum. As well as ticking clocks, there are displays about the Schönwald way of life and the oldest family-run smokehouse, still making delicious Black Forest ham.

Nordrach: traditional distilling

Fine fruit brandies are a speciality of Nordrach. Hike the Obstbrennerweg trail through the lovely Nordrachtal valley. Along the way are 13 Brennhisllis, family-run distilleries, where brandies and liqueurs are made from heritage fruit varieties.



Many local orchards provide fruit used to make fine schnapps. Taste them in Nordrach

Romancing the stones

In the Black Forest landscape, mysterious boulders are swathed in legends. In the Murg Valley near Forbach, we visited what are known as the Giersteine – and discovered total silence

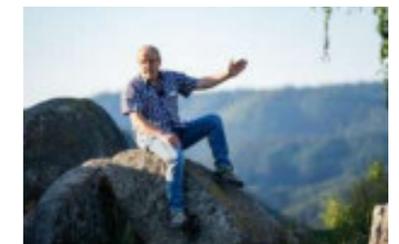
✍️ CHRISTIANE WÜRTEMBERGER 📷 OLIVER RAATZ

Rocks near Forbach: sacrificial stones or just nature's whim?

Before sinking behind the Black Forest mountains, the sun sends out the last rays of the day. The granite boulders are still warm to our touch. These are the Giersteine, near Forbach in the Murgtal valley, southeast of Baden-Baden. Back in 1905, someone carved steps into the largest of the massive stones, creating a natural pulpit. Climbing up is easy. As for the view, that stretches across to the mountains and down into the Murg River valley, taking in the pretty village of Forbach. It feels as if a hush has fallen; even the bird-song is quieter. No wonder the Giersteine was designated as a natural monument in 1940.

A place of mystical power that moves you

Manuela Maer lives nearby. She is an author and sometimes comes up here at night to find inspiration. Maer, whose real name is Claudia Mutschler, is an IT expert, who also writes fantasy



Bernd Schneider leads hikers to the Giersteine rocks

stories. She has incorporated the Giersteine into the plot of her latest novel, using the curious rock formations as a mystical setting. Here is a taste of her book: "All of a sudden, her father's body began to float. He moved gently towards the face of the rock and, when his head was above the hollow, with



Erosion revealed the Giersteine boulders

Claudia Mutschler writes fantasy novels as Manuela Maer



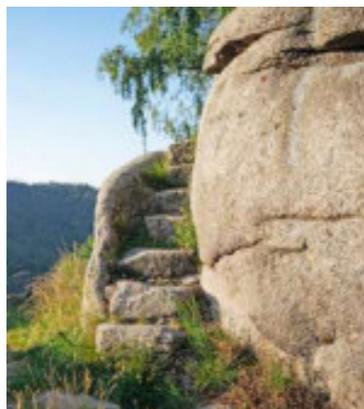
its deep crevices, he floated downwards. The dark-robed men lingering below the rock had begun a terrifying chant. Maledin's will was more and more under their spell." While reading this extract, the light on the Giersteine has changed. The warmth has faded; twilight heralds night-fall. Suddenly, it is easy to imagine that there is a grain of truth to the mystical stories.

Black Forest guide Bernd Schneider, who often brings hiking groups here, is familiar with Maer's books. He also likes to talk about the old legends. There are tales of animal and human sacrifices that Celtic druids offered up to gods in ancient times; the blood drained away through deep crevices in the rock. And a story about a pagan priestess, fleeing from the Christians. When monks came to capture her, the



I can use the energy that I feel from the Giersteine stones in my books." Manuela Maer

devil himself appeared by the stones. Is this all just over-active imagination? Bernd Schneider laughs: "Yes, probably, because geologists came to a different conclusion about the formation of the rocks years ago. They say that the miracle that created these stones is simply erosion: water and wind, heat and cold. Originally, everything here was covered with rocks, plants and earth. Over time, the earth was washed and worn away." What remains are the stones with their strange shapes, wrapped in lichen. And that special aura. It all makes the Giersteine a fine place to rest, relax and savour the panorama. And it is just a short hike up from Forbach railway station. ■



Steps to the Gersteine pulpit

More on the Black Forest?

schwarzwald-tourismus.info

More about the stones?

murgtal.org

BLACK FOREST HIGHLANDS



TIME OUT IN THE BLACK FOREST HIGHLANDS

Close to the French and Swiss borders, the unspoiled landscape of the Black Forest Highlands is naturally revitalising: perfect for relaxing and recharging your batteries. Enjoy time to yourself; enjoy the countryside

MOUNTAIN CLIMATE REGION

Take a deep breath and relax

Take a deep breath. Follow one of the specially designated Höhenklimawegen (high-altitude climate trails). Inhale mountain air; exhale everyday worries. Feel the sun's warmth on your skin. Smell tangy forest scents; listen to the quiet. That's what the Black Forest Highlands are all about.

hochschwarzwald.de/hoehenklimawege



NATURE PARK HOSTS

Fine food from the region

Offering quality and freshness, while protecting nature and the cultural landscape: this is what Naturparkwirte (nature park hosts) love to do. And, by serving dishes made with ingredients from the region, they support the local farmers, who preserve the Black Forest's landscape. hochschwarzwald.de/naturparkwirte



THE LAKES CYCLE TRAIL

Right on the water

Follow the Seenradweg (Lakes Cycle Trail) along the shores of Schluchsee, Titisee, Feldsee and the Windgfallweiher reservoir. Pedal past mountains, forests and meadows. Stop at rustic inns, where thirsty cyclists are welcome! In the heart of the Black Forest Highlands, this is cycling at its best. And on e-bikes, hills are never a problem. hochschwarzwald.de/seenradweg



More information

on the Great Outdoors in the Black Forest Highlands: hochschwarzwald.de

TIME TO REFLECT

A pilgrimage is so much more than just walking. Those who go on a pilgrimage are looking for spirituality and peace. Here are some hikes, where you can broaden your external – and internal – horizons



1

THE KAPELLENWEG
IN THE ELLWANG MOUNTAINS

3 hours to contemplate

From Schönenberg pilgrimage church, this circular route runs for 12 km / 7 miles over gentle hills, through pine woods, past chapels, wayside crosses and shrines. The limestone Albrauf ridge has glorious views.

schwaebischealb.de/touren/kapellenweg

PILGRIMAGE COMPANIONS

Walk and talk



3

In SouthWest Germany, a network of trained guides specialises in accompanying walkers on selected pilgrimage routes. These can be one-day or multi-day tours and they are designed for those, who are dealing with the problems and challenges of life.

2



LAKE CONSTANCE

Pilgrimage crossroad

Five pilgrimage trails cross the Lake Constance region: the Linzgauer Way of St James, the Beuron and the Tübingen, Hohenzoller and Hegau Ways. From there, many continue on for Santiago de Compostela. bodensee.eu/en

PILGRIMAGE PATHS

THE JAGSTTAL VALLEY

The Five Paths of Silence



4

Five communities in the Jagsttal valley, northeast of Heilbronn, have jointly set up five special pilgrimage routes. Along the way, hikers come across caves and chapels, ruins and long-forgotten steps in the forest. All these places have a spiritual and contemplative quality.



More information

on pilgrimage routes
tourism-bw.com



5

WU WEI WATER HIKE

Meditate as you walk

The Chinese Taoist concept of “wu wei” means “non-action”, or being in alignment with the ebb and flow of the natural world. In the valley of the River Rench, west of Freudenstadt, this guided meditation hike includes, for example, mindfulness and breathing exercises. bad-peterstal-griesbach.de

6



NORTHERN BLACK FOREST
MONASTERY TRAIL

Pedalling pilgrims

This route takes in medieval monasteries and castle ruins; it follows river valleys and climbs some 800 m / 2,500 ft into the Black Forest for impressive views. Starting in Maulbronn, northwest of Stuttgart, it finishes 150 km / 100 miles later in Alpirsbach, where the reward is a beer or two at the Klosterbräu monastic brewery. schwarzwald-tourismus.info

UPPER SWABIA

The holy mountain



7

In Upper Swabia, pilgrims can hike seven routes dotted with pilgrimage churches, monasteries and places with religious links. For many, the high point (literally!) of all the routes is Upper Swabia’s “holy mountain”, the 767-m / 2,500-ft high Bussen, southwest of Ulm. oberschwaben-tourismus.de

Small towns, big hearts

Photogenic houses; cobbled streets; cheerful marketplaces: these are the Kleinstadtperlen, the small town gems of SouthWest Germany. With history, loads of character and beautiful countryside settings, they could be straight out of a fairy tale.

Schwäbisch Hall is known for its medieval half-timbered houses

Everyone has heard of Stuttgart and Heidelberg, the Black Forest and Lake Constance, but to understand the heart and soul of the region, explore the Kleinstadtperlen, the small town gems. Each has its own tale to tell. Some are known for great wine, beer or schnapps; others for a special bread, cake or dish. There are unusual small museums and pedestrianised shopping streets, with one-of-a-kind boutiques. Fine old market squares still host bustling weekly markets, where farmers sell their fresh produce and neighbours meet to chat. Unlike better-known destinations, there are no crowds, so they are perfect for a short trip. And, of course, the people, who serve you in taverns and cafés, shops and markets, are all locals and happy to share their local knowledge.

Straight out of a fairytale

Only an hour northwest of Stuttgart and surrounded by vineyards, Bretten is known for its handsome half-timbered houses, as well as Germany's largest petting zoo and a small museum dedicated to Guardian Angels. North of Bretten, Weinheim has a romantic ruined fortress, a medieval Tanners' Quarter and, lending a Mediterranean ambiance, a market square with inns and cafés, where you can eat, drink and watch the world go by. East of Stuttgart, Ellwangen has been a destination for centuries thanks to the ornate Schönenberg pilgrimage church.

Today, there are still pilgrims, but there are also secular-minded visitors, who go for the heritage shops. Then, there is Ebingen, the 'Beer Culture City'. Close to the River Danube, it boasts five breweries producing 53 different beers. Add in a unique Beer Hiking Trail to help work up a thirst, and this is a must-visit for beer



E-bike touring in the Swabian Alb



Oberkirch's car-free lanes are perfect for wandering through the old town



lovers. The Black Forest is dotted with small communities well worth discovering. In Oberkirch, distilling is the tradition, with 700 distilleries, many family-run, using local orchard fruits, such as cherries, apples, pears and apricots to make classic schnapps and brandies. Nearby, Endingen is on the Kaiserstuhl, the heart of wine country, close to the Rhine. Learn more about winemaking on a tractor ride – then taste the award-winning wines.

Also on the Rhine is Bad Säckingen. Stroll through winding streets; look up at the twin towers of St Fridolin's Minster; take your time over gourmet dishes; relax in the natural mineral springs. And if you love the Great Outdoors, there are two towns to choose from. Schramberg is known for its watchmaking history, but

Historic Rottenburg sits on the River Neckar: ideal for a stroll

also offers great walks along its premium hiking trail. Then there is Münsingen, an ideal base to rent e-bikes and pedal the trails in the UNESCO Swabian Alb Biosphere Reserve and the Swabian Alb Geopark, with breathtaking views along the way. ■

More information

on Small Town Gems
tourism-bw.com/destinations/small-town-gems

We have lift off!

On a balloon ride over the Swabian Alb, you float
silently above forests, meadows and villages.

It is all so calm; the world seems to be in slow motion

✍️ CHRISTIANE WÜRTEMBERGER 📷 DIETMAR DENGER



Rudi Fuchs only
flies his balloon
over the Alb when
weather conditions
are perfect



Guests also help to set up the balloon



Where are they going? Rudi's wife chases the balloon in her car

We've taken off already! The wicker basket lifts off so silently from the meadow in the Lautertal valley that you only notice that you are airborne by the change in perspective.

This quiet start takes me by surprise, as I have secretly been fighting my fear of flying. I don't like to get on a plane – and now I'm supposed to cruise through the sky over the Swabian Alb in a small wicker basket? With nothing but hot air holding me up? And a pilot, who is very experienced, but, basically, cannot control his vehicle?

Pilot Rudi Fuchs fires up the burners. The gas hisses in bursts, breathing flames that heat up the air in the 180-kg / 400-pound balloon. The hotter the air, the higher we can fly. And right after the start, things take an unexpected turn: for a moment, the treetops on the hill-

“ I feel very free up here, almost weightless.”

Rudi Fuchs, balloon pilot

side look very close. “We have to act quickly now,” says 61-year-old Rudi with a laugh, but he doesn't seem concerned. It is reassuring to have this totally-relaxed balloon expert in charge; I can chat with him about what is going on. It's so much nicer than being on a plane: here I am in direct contact with the pilot and with the world all around me.

It's so peaceful up here

The effect is dramatic. Even before we are up and over the mountain, my fear of flying has disappeared. Everything up here makes me happy. The morning sunshine. The incredible silence. The peace. It's amazing how quietly we fly – sorry – drift. And how beautiful the Alb is on a morning like this. At seven o'clock, mist still wreaths the meadows, dark forests and small villages.



Rudi Fuchs often flies over the Alb and Lake Constance

“What I like about ballooning is that it is so slow and deliberate,” says Rudi Fuchs. “It is a real art to work out where you are going to fly to, and where you can land safely when you get there. But I only fly when the weather is absolutely perfect.” Besides the silence, the great thing about ballooning is that you usually fly between 500 - 1,000 m / 1,600 - 3,350 ft above the ground, so you can see a lot going on below. A herd of cows galloping. Deer in a field. A cyclist racing downhill on the road below us. We are travelling over the Swabian Alb Biosphere Reserve around Münsingen, southeast of

Stuttgart; its unspoiled countryside makes this a great holiday region. But the world below is still asleep and silent.

Although Rudi reckons that the wind is blowing at about 15 km / 10 miles an hour up here, we don't really notice a breeze. “It feels that way because we use the wind to carry us along,” he explains. It's a bit like we're in slow motion and someone has turned the sound off. “Today, we'll probably land at Trochtelfingen in about 90 minutes' time,” says Rudi, who has already made more than 2,000 trips as a balloon

pilot. By contrast, all five of us passengers are first-timers. Carmen gave her friend Angelika the ride as a present, so that she could overcome her fear of heights. Siggie and Erwin have wanted to do something like this for a long time. And me? I just stand in the basket and envy the birds. In the distance, we spot Hohenzollern Castle. We hop over a little wood near Trochtelfingen, then sink back to earth as if everything is in slow motion. With an imperceptible hop, the basket lands in a meadow. Time to climb out, pack up and go to breakfast.

I give Angelika a pat on the back. We two scaredy cats made it. No, we did more than just make it. I can see that by the expression on her face. We both actually enjoyed it! ■

More on ballooning:
fuchs-ballonfahrten.de

More about the Swabian Alb
and benefits with the free AlbCard guest card:
schwaebischealb.de

BAD URACH



Ancient half-timbered houses on Bad Urach's market square



Time out: hike, then relax in the AlbThermen spa



Hiking is a pleasure

The five Grafensteige Premium Hiking Trails around Bad Urach take hikers into the UNESCO Swabian Alb Biosphere Reserve. And after all the fresh air, there are soothing thermal baths and great food

The area around Bad Urach is made for hikers, who want to have fun all day and every day. On the doorstep is the UNESCO Swabian Alb Biosphere Reserve, crisscrossed by more than 150 km / 100 miles of hiking trails. Five of them are the Grafensteige Premium Hiking Trails. Particularly rewarding is the Hohenwittlingensteig trail, a loop of 6.3 km / 4 miles. It goes up, down and all around, taking in orchards, rocks and the Alb plateau. Highlights include the rocky promontory that is dominated by the ruins of Hohenwittlingen castle, the mysterious Schiller Cave and the Wolfsschlucht gorge, with its lush greenery and unusual geological formations.

Southeast of Stuttgart, Bad Urach makes an ideal base for hikes and excursions. But there is more. As well as a beautiful medieval market square, the town offers accommodation for all tastes and budgets: hotels and holiday apartments, rustic inns and a peaceful camping and mobile home site. The numerous cafés, taverns and restaurants serve traditio-

nal regional dishes, such as Spaetzle (noodles), Maultaschen (like ravioli), Schupfnudeln (potato dumplings) and local lamb. No wonder foodies enjoy holidaying in the Swabian Alb! And there is a long tradition of wellness. The natural mineral springs of the AlbThermen spa produce water at a steady 32°–38°C / 90°–100°F: good for body and soul. And the sauna area, covering 3,000 sq m / 32,000 sq ft, is all about relaxation, with soothing views over the mountains and the Hohenurach castle ruins. ■

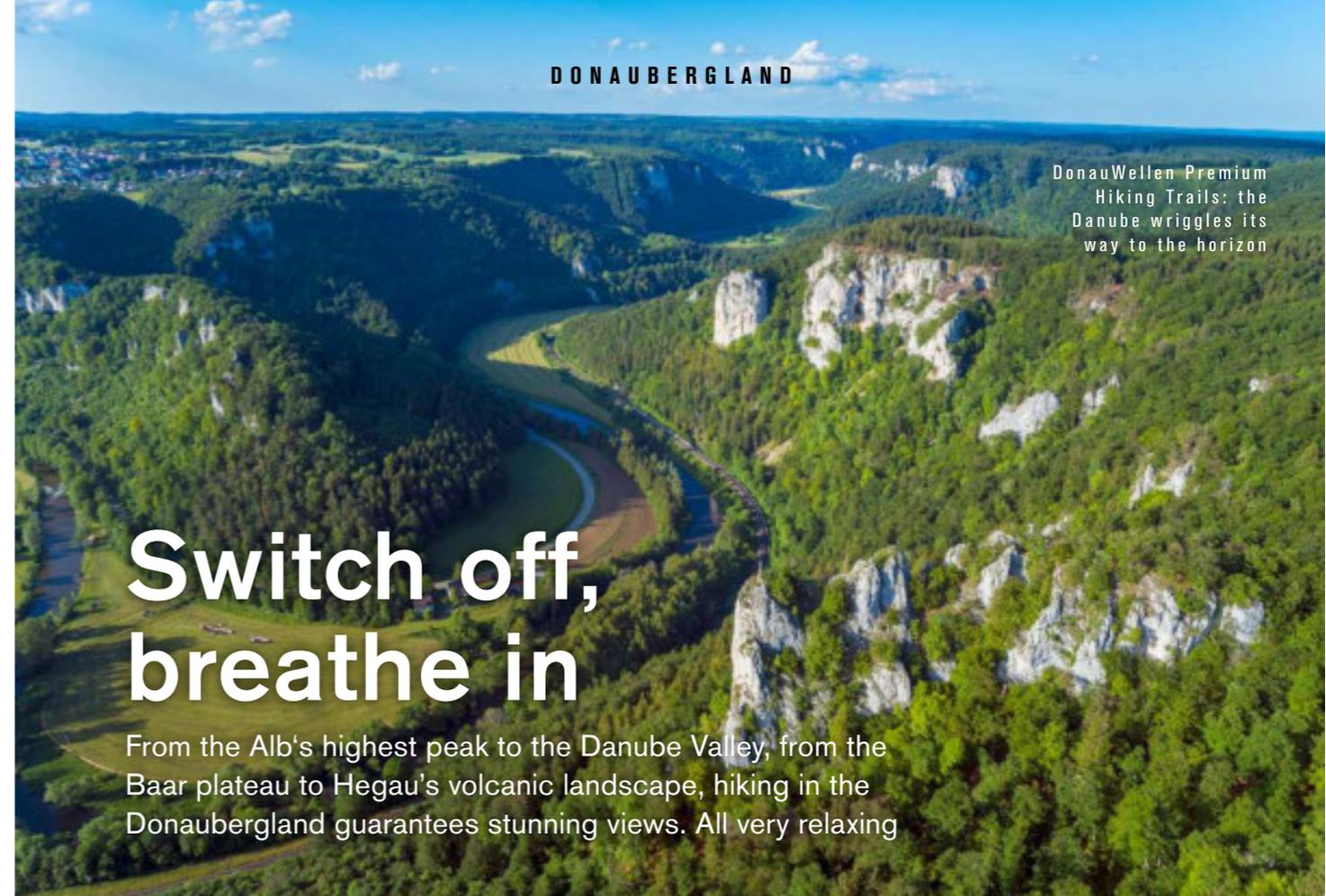


More information and maps

on hikes, tips for excursions and overnight stays:

badurach-tourismus.de/en and en.albthermen.com

DONAUBERGLAND



DonauWellen Premium Hiking Trails: the Danube wriggles its way to the horizon

Switch off, breathe in

From the Alb's highest peak to the Danube Valley, from the Baar plateau to Hegau's volcanic landscape, hiking in the Donaubergland guarantees stunning views. All very relaxing

Some of SouthWest Germany's most beautiful hiking trails are in the Donaubergland, the mountains that flank the 'Young Danube', the early stretch of the River Danube. This region is all about views. Time and again, the landscape opens up panoramas that dazzle the eyes and lift the soul. Near Gosheim is Lemberg mountain, not only the highest point in the Swabian Alb, but you can also climb the tall steel observation tower for extra height! On clear days, you can see as far as the Alps. From the western edge of

the Alb's limestone ridge, the mountain ranges of the Black Forest look like a painting on the horizon. Then, there are the teetering rocks above the section of the Danube Valley between Tuttlingen and Sigmaringen, which is nicknamed the Swabian Grand Canyon.

Here, hikers have dizzy views of the Danube and the valley, where medieval monks once wielded immense influence from Beuron Monastery. This upper part of the river is idyllic and peaceful, so you can sit by the water and let your thoughts drift away. For a different perspective of the Upper Danube Nature Park, rent a canoe and paddle downstream. Or follow the river on one of the DonauWellen Premium Hiking Trails. Walk along the Donaufelsen (Danube Cliffs) path near Fridingen; enjoy the Eichfelsen route between Beuron and Wildenstein Castle. Sweeping vistas of mountains and the blue-green Danube are guaranteed. ■



More Information

More about the region's hiking trails at: deutsche-donau.com/hiking



Enjoy DanubeWellen: it's the name of a cake - and a hiking trail

Walking is magic

Sometimes you need time to yourself, a break from the everyday hustle and bustle. The Ehinger Alb is the perfect choice. On this 51-km / 32-mile Meditation Trail, hikers find time and space to rethink and reboot

✍ ANNE SCHÜSSLER 📷 UDO BERNHARDT



Small details make the hike very special

The striking Narrow and Wide Horizon installation is 16 m / 50 ft long



Castle ruins, caves, forests: there's lots to explore in the Lautertal valley

The Grosse Lauter river ripples softly under Anna's feet. Shimmering blue dragonflies dance just above the surface. She is sitting on a thick tree trunk that fell into the river years ago. Now it forms a natural bridge to the other bank – and a comfy place to relax and rest. Anna is on the Ehinger Alb Meditation Trail, that runs for 51 km / 32 miles through the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, southwest of Ulm. Certified by the German Hiking Association, this circular route leads across the Ehinger Alb region and the foothills of the Alb, through dense forests, up and over small hills. It is almost as varied as life itself – with expansive views along the way.

The path follows the Grosse Lauter, Germany's Natural Wonder of the Year

The scenery induces contemplation. As you walk, you may reflect on things spiritual and perhaps find answers to questions, such as: "Where do I want to go in life?" "Where am I right now?" That is Anna's intention. She often feels stressed at work and wants to get away from appointments and conferences and just enjoy the silence of nature. This section of the trail leads from Erbstetten through the Lauter-

tal valley and on via Mundingen to Dächingen. Leaving her tree trunk, she carries on along the Grosse Lauter. Named Germany's Natural Wonder of the Year by the Heinz Sielmann Foundation in 2019, this river is the valley's lifeline. On its banks, bushes grow as tall as a man. Steep cliffs rise on the other side of the path. And high on the hill, the ruined Wartstein castle stands on guard duty, watching over the valley.

Alfons Köhler knows the Meditation Trail particularly well. This tavern-owner from Dächingen grew up in the region: "Our home in the Swabian Alb is very important to me and my family," he says. "That's why I was involved in planning the trail right from the start." However, the Ehinger Alb Meditation Trail is more than a long circular route. Along the way, it connects to other themed trails and places of interest. And Anna's next stop is one of these. The Life Horizon Trail in Mundingen is a mix-

ture of themes: meditation and art. Tübingen artist Martin Burchard has created six installations for it, all dealing with spirituality. For example, three brightly-coloured prayer wheels are set in a wooden shelter. The idea is to help hikers think about what they can be thankful for. Anna slowly spins the wheels. They show words, such as harmony, inspiration, clarity and peace.

The hiking trail combines nature with art

"My absolute favourite on the Life Horizon Trail is the 'Narrow and Wide Horizon' installation", says Alfons. "It symbolizes people's journey through life, starting with the restraints of everyday and then opening up to heaven and liberation." Anna is amazed when she sees this



“**The nature here gives me a lot of strength for everyday life.**”

Alfons Köhler

massive art installation further up the path. From the front, it looks like the wings of an eagle. Fascinated, she walks through and runs her hands over the tall, cool pipework.

Alfons explains: "Along the path, there are places that give you both strength and a feeling of calm. Another of my favourite spots is called 'The Role', a wet habitat where you can get inspiration for everyday life." With every step Anna takes, she notices more and more details of the natural world. With so much to see, Alfons' advice is to slow down and take time, all the better to enjoy the unique landscape at the foot of the Swabian Alb, where new perspectives open up round every turn in the trail. At the end of the day, Anna arrives at the pilgrimage church in Dächingen. Taking a seat in a pew, she experiences a completely different kind of meditation. Not about nature, but about the power of religion. And this is as calming and relaxing as sitting on the mossy tree trunk at the start of the day. ■

More about the Meditation Trail
schwaebischealb.de/wandern

Nature's bounty

SouthWest Germany's health spas and resorts are using the natural benefits of earth, water and air to create healthy, relaxing treatments

MUD AND PEAT THERAPY

Earthy connections

Mud packs, peat baths and clay wraps: Mother Earth is good for you. Mud baths were known for their healing properties as far back as the 14th century. Today, we understand why: the organic acids and minerals in the mud work naturally to fight inflammation and strengthen the immune system. And, the warmth of the mud is good; it relaxes tired muscles and stimulates the metabolism and circulation. As well as peat, other natural substances are on trend: mud, silt, loam and lime. In SouthWest Germany, treatments at spas and resorts tap into many of the earth's natural benefits. Do you know how nice it is to walk barefoot on the soft forest floor? Or how soothing a mud bath is? These are just some examples. For more, please read on.



Bad Buchau on Federsee lake is a mineral and mud spa, uniting the power of earth and water

BAD BUCHAU: The Federsee boardwalk is special, running over the marshy moorland through reeds and water meadows to the viewing platform on the lake.

BAD WURZACH: In the Vitalium Therme, you can take a mud bath in an old-fashioned wooden tub. Or have a health check. Or a glass of champagne!



THERMAL AND BRINE BATHS

Water: the elixir of life

Water is the key to wellbeing: it flows and refreshes; it warms and cleanses. It also heals. Float in warm, mineral-rich spa water and your body feels light; you relax. The Romans knew about the beneficial effects of water and built thermal baths using hot spring water that gurgled out of the ground. In present-day SouthWest Germany, they found many of these springs and built spas above them. Today, no other region of Germany boasts as many high-quality spas and health resorts. In the thermal and brine baths, you benefit from the minerals, trace elements and saltwater/brine. Different spas have different specialities. Here are some examples:

BAD SCHÖNBORN: Thermal-Vitalagen packages include 2 nights' hotel, 2 Sole-Heilbad spa visits and a salt cave session. Near Heidelberg.

BAD WILDBAD: The 3-day Spa Dream package includes a visit to the Palais Thermal spa and a massage. In the Enztal, west of Stuttgart.

More information and packages

are here: natureholt.de

CLIMATIC HEALTH RESORTS

Not all air is the same

Whether you are high in the Black Forest or trying tunnel therapy underground, you can breathe more deeply, recharge your batteries and improve your health. That is because fresh forest air, along with the right temperature, wind and humidity, help to restore both the body and soul. In SouthWest Germany, there are 20 climatic health resorts. The region's mild and temperate climate has positive effects on your health, boosting the immune system, alleviating allergies and asthma. So, start by taking a deep breath; feel stress disappear into thin air.

SCHÖNWALD: The Geniesserpfad trail in the heart of the Black Forest is 11 km / 7 miles long. Walk; switch off; listen. Try forest bathing. Take a green break. Breathe in pure air.

NEUBULACH: In the Northern Black Forest, try tunnel therapy underground in a 'healing gallery'. The pollen-free environment alleviates allergies and breathing ailments. Listen to meditative gongs; do breathing exercises.

LOVING THE WATER: THE SWABIAN ALB'S MOST BEAUTIFUL THERMAL BATHS

Take the plunge: soothing spa water and an elegant atmosphere create the perfect wellness break in the thermal baths of the Swabian Alb

1



BAD URACH

A classic fountain of youth

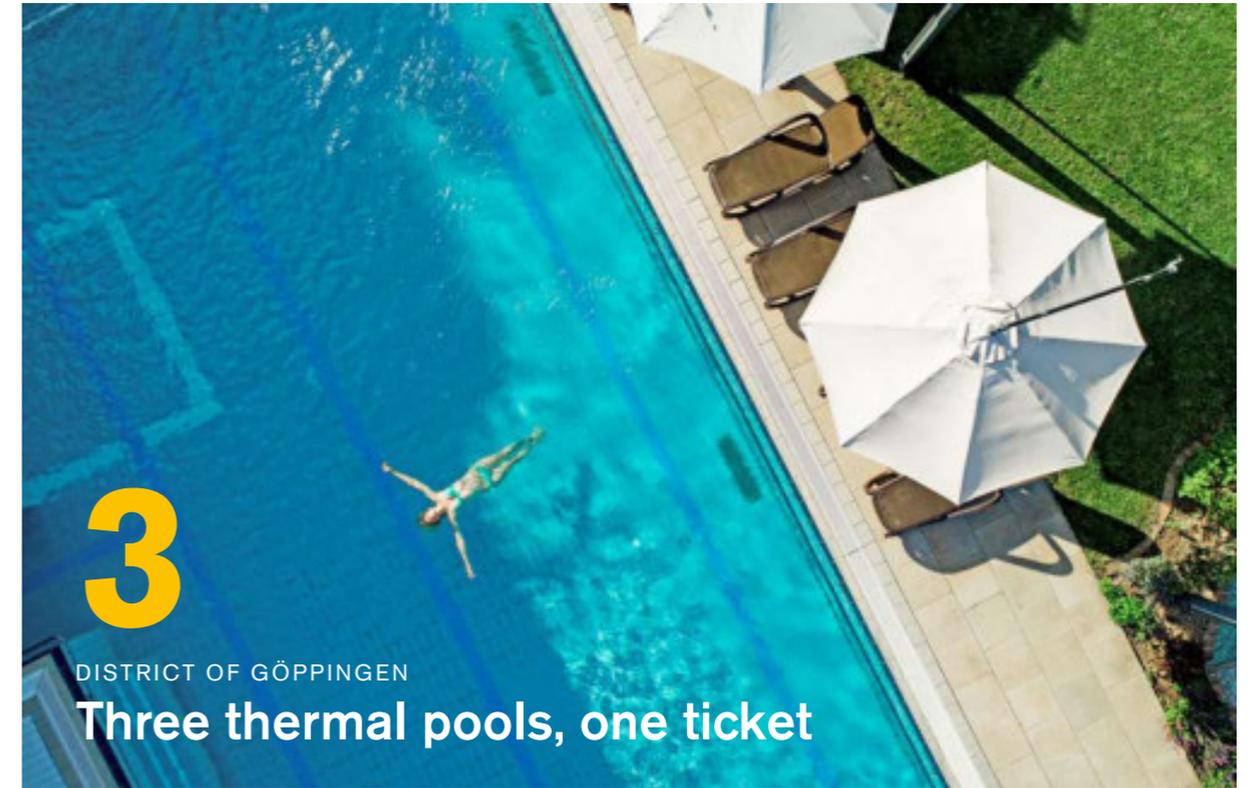
At the AlbThermen spa, one million litres (220,000 gallons) of thermal mineral water gush up every day, straight into the indoor and outdoor pools. They come from 770 m / 2,500 ft below – and are a soothing 32–38°C / 90–100°F. In Bad Urach, the focus is on the sensual, including an elaborate light show with 4,000 possible colour moods. At dusk, the entire spa is immersed in a sea of light. The facilities in the wellness area are traditional, yet ultra-modern. For example, familiar saunas, such as Finnish and steam, are matched by rain showers and even a waterfall. Wellness treatments, such as massages, and a stylish restaurant add to the experience.



BAD BLAU

The best of both worlds

Fun in the water and soothing spa treatments: no wonder the Therme Bad Blau in Blaustein is popular. Young and old can enjoy the giant water slide and then relax in the warm SoleVital pool. They can exercise in the sports or adventure pools and follow up with a steam bath. Or a sauna. There are six to choose from, each with its own ambience and temperatures. For special occasions, the Lapland area with its wood-burning sauna and barbecue can be rented out.



DISTRICT OF GÖPPINGEN

Three thermal pools, one ticket

In the Göppingen district, the 15 Löwenpfaden (Lion Trails) are local hiking paths that provide panoramic views over the Alb. And after a half or full-day of hiking in this beautiful natural landscape, what could be better than warm soothing thermal baths? Pure bliss! Choose from the spas in Bad Boll, Bad Ditzenbach or Bad Überkingen. Or, get the special ticket that covers all three – at a reduced-price!



More information

is available at:
[schwaebischealb.de/
wellness-gesundheit](http://schwaebischealb.de/wellness-gesundheit)

Tip: With the AlbCard,
entry to many baths
is free.



BEUREN

Relaxation with a view

Slow down. Unwind. Switch off. Discerning guests will find the elegant Panorama Therme spa ticks all the boxes: seven thermal pools at different temperatures; several saunas and steam baths; a thermal grotto; a wide range of health and wellness treatments. Everything from muscle-easing massage jets to views over the woods and hills guarantee total relaxation. This all-round feel-good package in Beuren includes a spacious outdoor area in summer and excellent healthy dishes.

Relax naturally

The best way to recharge our batteries? Experts say we relax better in harmony with nature. And SouthWest Germany's spas and health resorts offer so many options. We visit Bad Dürrhein in the Black Forest

✍️ CHRISTIANE WÜRTEMBERGER 📷 OLIVER RAATZ

Feel your way, step by step, on the barefoot path in Bad Dürrhein



It is a hot summer day in Bad Dür rheim, southwest of Stuttgart. But the air in the long wooden building is pleasantly cool. I am in the Gradierwerk, a long wooden building, where salty mineral water trickles down through 6,000 bundles of blackthorn twigs. This saltwater respiratory centre creates a healthy microclimate. Just watching the drips form pearl-like water droplets is calming. More importantly, inhaling the ozone-like air helps to treat respiratory problems, such as asthma and bronchitis. But, like being at the seaside, the salty air also boosts the well-being of healthy people. The recommendation is to stay here for 20 to 30 minutes, breathing deeply, closing our eyes and letting go completely.

Increasingly popular in Europe, this Gradier-

Kneipp preached the benefits of walking in cold water

werk therapy is not limited to Bad Dür rheim. Similar saltwater respiratory centres are in other well-known spa destinations in SouthWest Germany, such as Bad Mergentheim, Bad Rappena u, Bad Schönborn, Menzenschwand and Bad Wimpfen. These all have natural springs gushing out saline hot water, at temperatures averaging 28–37° C / 82–99° F. In the indoor and outdoor pools, the heat relaxes the muscles; the buoyant salt water eases painful joints. The salt also improves the complexion.

In Bad Dür rheim, salt deposits were first discovered 200 years ago. Today, its trio of contrasting specialities is unique in SouthWest Germany. As well as the saltwater spa, it is a climatic health resort, thanks to an altitude of 733 m / 2,400 ft. And, it is a Kneipp spa.



“
Our health experts are developing more and more natural treatments for guests.”

Markus Spettel, Managing Director
Kur- und Bäder GmbH Bad Dür rheim



In 2021, Germany celebrates the 200th birthday of Sebastian Kneipp, an early proponent of naturopathic medicine in general and hydrotherapy (using water to treat medical conditions) in particular. His name is usually associated with walking through icy-cold water, but the therapies often consist of plunging parts of the body in contrasting cold and warm water. We go for a stroll in the spa park and, at the Kneipp pool,

spontaneously take off our sandals and step into water over our calves. It is so cold that we gasp. But, somehow, wading slowly refreshes our whole body. Afterwards, our feet feel surprisingly warm and light again.

Today, SouthWest Germany’s medical experts are offering more and more recreational and health experiences, all using natural remedies. Guided by the motto, Natur Erholt (Recovering Naturally), they promote the natural benefits of thermal springs, salt brine and special muds, as well as healthy climates, altitude, forests and herbs.

SouthWest Germany boasts a dozen specialist Kneipp spa centres

This idea of relaxing and recharging your batteries sounds good in theory, but how does it actually work in practice? Scientific studies know that this varies greatly from person to person. But, in general, the best way to help ourselves is to discover something new, something that contrasts with everyday life. Those with physical jobs relax by doing nothing – or reading a book. Those whose work is intellectual or staring at screens all day benefit from being active. But one thing is certain: the power of nature always has a healing effect. That could mean going for a walk in the forest or booking in for a wellness treatment.

For us, the hard thing is deciding what to choose. Bad Dür rheim has so much, from the Solemar spa with its thermal baths to the Black

Why SouthWest Germany's spas are special

The Romans knew a good thermal spring when they saw one – and discovered dozens in present-day SouthWest Germany. Today, they are the foundation of the region's spa culture, which includes some 60 spa destinations. The names of many of them begin with Bad, because "Bad" in German means bath. But, whatever they are called, they all use springs that provide naturally hot, mineral-rich water. The temperature is altered for various uses from thermal baths for soothing tired muscles to pools with underwater jets for massaging aching backs. Even water parks for family fun! Spas are part of daily life in SouthWest Germany. As well as offering pampering and relaxation, they provide much, much more. Each spring has different minerals, perhaps iron, magnesium, calcium or potassium. And these help specific ailments, from arthritis and circulation to skin conditions and stress. Therapies could include mineral-rich mudpacks and salt cave therapy for respiratory conditions. And, of course, more familiar treatments are also on the menu: facials, manicures and pedicures; aromatherapy and massages; scrubs, wraps and saunas. Ancient traditions, such as Ayurveda and Qi Gong, might also be incorporated. As for the ambience, some spas have Art Nouveau grandeur; others are contemporary; all are staffed by highly-trained professionals. And, most importantly, they are open to all.



The Solemar spa's Black Forest sauna



Top: Cold water arm baths in Bad Dürreheim's spa park are part of Kneipp theory

Above and Right: The spa has 13 different pools



Forest sauna and Dead Sea salt cave. We are encouraged to do some water aerobics or gentle swimming; we are assured that our everyday worries will fade away, as our thoughts wander and our minds go blank. Then, there are activities to keep us busy. We can walk in the spa park, try Nordic walking or work out on the outdoor fitness equipment. Not forgetting yoga and meditation, painting courses in the park, the parkour with fitness equipment or the adventure golf course.

We decide to try the Barfussweg (barefoot path) in the spa park. Walking on round, cool pebbles seems to massage the soles of my feet. Not so comfortable is stepping on the wood mulch surface. But the idea is to sharpen up the senses and so reconnect with nature. During health-oriented holidays, the body and mind are more receptive to new ways of doing things. Training the senses makes it easier to change habits, to notice the little things in life and to gain energy. And we may find answers to questions. What do we really need to be happy and satisfied? What is really important in our lives?

What are the best changes to make? Which habits should we keep? And which habits should we drop?

Then, there is digital detoxing. This is the simplest way to properly recharge our batteries – but also the hardest. Even on holiday, 70 percent of us can be reached by our employers or clients. Yet, health experts recommend that we switch off our phones. Once we are offline, we enjoy a new freedom. We have more time for our own thoughts and new experiences, as well as friends and family. Time to hike or bike on the network of routes around Bad Dürreheim; time to listen to the sounds of the countryside. Or, do as we do: just stroll through the spa park. ■



More information

on relaxation and health holidays in Bad Dürreheim and the other health resorts and spas: tourism-bw.com

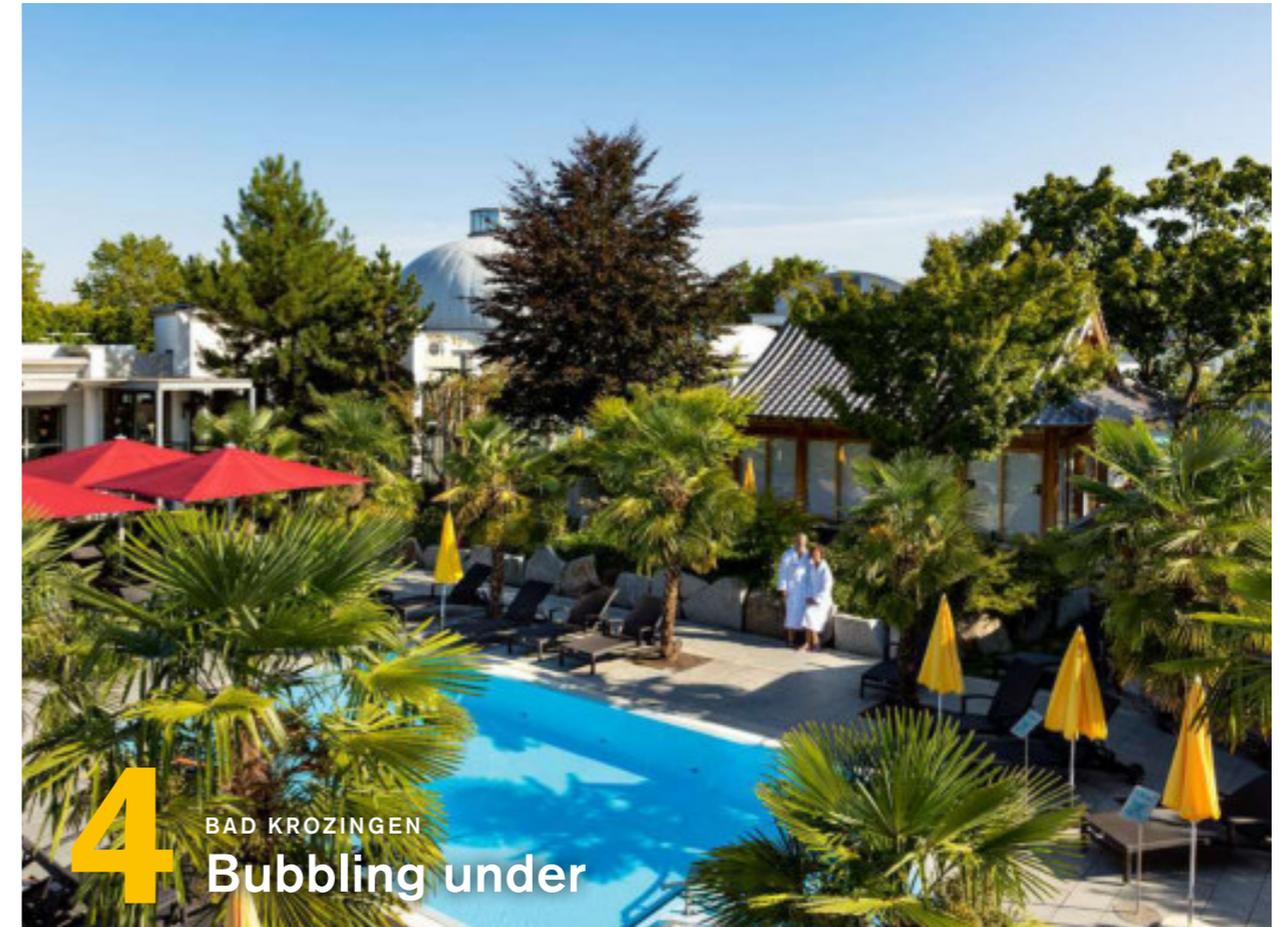


WELLNESS WORLDS

Whether you try Roman, Irish or Indian-style spas, wellness holidays in SouthWest Germany are good for both body and soul. Here are some examples

1 ÜBERLINGEN Lake view

Stunning views over Lake Constance are guaranteed from the spacious sauna garden at Überlingen's Bodensee-Therme spa. Between sessions at the Boathouse sauna, the Lake sauna or the Panorama sauna, you can stretch out and make yourself comfortable on the sun loungers right on the shore of the lake. On a clear day, the panorama of the Alps is spectacular. The massage deck is also outdoors in the open air. In winter, you can sit by a crackling log fire indoors or take a nap upstairs. Or both! bodensee.eu/en/where-to-travel/lake-constance-cities/ueberlingen



4 BAD KROZINGEN Bubbling under

In the Vita Classica spa resort near Freiburg, the thermal water is particularly beneficial. The fine, highly-concentrated bubbles of carbon dioxide stimulate circulation and help calm blood vessels and nerves. In the wellness centre, you can unwind as you try treatments from other cultures around the world. Perhaps a Japanese Bath? Or a Moroccan Bath? Or an Ayurvedic full body massage in an Indian Bath? bad-krozingen.info/en



2

BAD MERGENTHEIM Four healing springs



3



BADENWEILER Roman-Irish style

In the Cassiopeia Therme spa, near Freiburg, the Roman-Irish bath combines two traditions. Steam and dry; water and air; temperature changes, from cold to warm to hot; the benefits of thermal pools; a gentle soap brush massage. All these help to stimulate the circulation, which is good for the body as well as the mind. Using special light therapy, you can experience the desert sun rising and setting – perfect when the days are shorter. badenweiler.de/en

Mineral water from four healing springs gushes up from below this spa town, northeast of Stuttgart. In the Brunnentempel, drink health-giving water from the Wilhelm, Karl or Albert springs – or bring your own bottle and fill it up. Bathe in the Paulsquelle pool. In the Gradierpavillon saltwater respiratory centre, the briny air benefits the lungs and calms the entire system. bad-mergentheim.de/en



More information

and suggestions for wellness breaks:
tourism-bw.com

BAD DITZENBACH From thermal bath to herb garden

The romantic spa town of Bad Ditzgenbach is in the Upper Filstal, one of the Swabian Alb's most beautiful valleys. The Canisius spring is known for its highly carbonated mineral water that gushes up into the modern Vinzenz thermal baths, guaranteeing an invigorating, healthy soak. Tip: do visit the Kräuterhaus Sankt Bernhard, specialising in natural remedies. Tour the herb garden; buy health-giving products in the shop, made from local herbs. schwaebischealb.de/staedte-orte/bad-ditzenbach



5

SPA HOPPING: TRY SOMETHING NEW

Across the Upper Swabia Allgäu spa region, diversity is the buzz word. From natural hot springs to unusual mud treatments, all the ingredients for a relaxing holiday are here: bright, modern facilities, professional staff offering a warm welcome and charming spa towns set in unspoiled countryside.



3 BIBERACH AN DER RISS Parkhotel Jordanbad Spa Hotel

In a peaceful park, the family-run 4-star Parkhotel Jordanbad combines the advantages of a modern wellness hotel with Kneipp hydrotherapy tradition. Hotel guests have free entry to the thermal baths, all of 6,000 sq m / 65,000 sq ft – and the spacious sauna village. Whether you want to splash about with little ones, relax in the wooden sauna cabins or indulge in the thermal pools, wellness and relaxation are assured. jordanbad-parkhotel.com



1 BAD WALDSEE Upper Swabia's No 1 hot spot

From 2,000 m / 6,500 ft down, Upper Swabia's hottest thermal spring gushes out water at 65°C / 150°F. But the water for the four indoor and two outdoor pools at the Waldsee Therme baths is cooled down; choose from a restful 28°C / 82°F or the warmer 37 °C / 98°F. Fancy a sauna? There is a trio on offer: a softsauna, the infrared Thermium and the classic Finnish sauna. waldsee-therme.de



2 BAD BUCHAU Relax in a birchwood sauna

In Bad Buchau, the Adelindis Therme baths are in SouthWest Germany's largest nature reserve. Shed the stresses of everyday life; lie back and relax in the soothing hot natural mineral water. In the eight thermal pools, the hydro massage offers everything from caressing bubbles to high-powered jets of water. The large sauna area has a choice of six saunas. adelindistherme.de

AULENDORF Wellness under a dome

The vast glass dome above the Schwaben-Therme Aulendorf spa enables the pools to be enjoyed year round – because on fine summer days, it opens up! As well as the large thermal bath and sauna area, there is a pool where families can have fun. Tip: from the Thermal-Hotel, guests can walk to the pools and saunas in their bathrobes. schwaben-therme.de



UPPER SWABIA ALLGÄU

BAD WURZACH The feel good, feelMOOR experience

Wurzach's marshes are known for Moor, rich therapeutic peat. Like warm mud, it is part of a traditional, natural, wellness programme. Try it at the new feelMOOR Vitalium-Therme spa, one of Germany's most modern centres for this special treatment. Round off this feel-good experience in the spa's extensive thermal and sauna area. feelmoor.de



BAD SAULGAU 5 star wellness; 5 star luxury

In Bad Saulgau, sulphur-rich mineral water bubbles up from 650 m / 2,100 ft below, straight into the Sonnenhof Therme's thermal baths. There is also a large sauna area for relaxation. Rated 5 Wellness Stars, this spa guarantees high quality facilities, comfort and service. sonnenhof-therme.de



More information

about Upper Swabia is at:
oberschwaben-tourismus.de/reisewelten/gesundheits-wellness/health-wellness

SLEEP MORE SOUNDLY

Enjoy your holiday with a clear conscience. Book into accommodation, where the focus is on sustainability. Here, we suggest some hotels and inns that are both attractive and one-of-a-kind!



1

EUROPA-PARK

Fun day and night

Stay in one of Europa-Park's six themed hotels in Rust and you not only have several days of fun in Germany's largest amusement park, but you also know that your holiday is sustainable. Five of the hotels have already passed the "Environmental Check" of the German Hotel and Restaurant Association. And the Krønasår museum hotel will soon follow. Inside the theme park, too, the environment has been upgraded: 2,000 trees, 18,000 shrubs and 60,000 flowers were planted recently around the Rulantica Water World. Also installed were 158 nesting boxes, colonies of bees and a wildlife and bat corridor. europapark.de/en



2

BIOHOTEL MOHREN

Food grown on site

The owner of the Biohotel Mohren in Limpach, north of Lake Constance, is not only a hotelier, he is also a farmer and chef. In the hotel kitchen, he creates delicious dishes that feature produce grown on his own organically-certified farm. His Aberdeen Angus cattle graze outside in the meadow; his orchards are the perfect place for a stroll. mohren.bio



BURGUNDERHOF

A glass of organic wine with dinner

3

Wine lovers can enjoy the hotel's own organic wines – and also their brandies, made from organic fruit. Not forgetting the distillery's award-winning "Mile High 69" gin. With all this, and the organic farm, holidays at the Burgunderhof Hagnau on Lake Constance are truly special. And the hotel itself has been certified climate-neutral since 2015. burgunderhof.de

HOTEL SCHWARZWALD PANORAMA

Carbon-neutral views

Adhering to Germany's Sustainability Code, with awards to match, the Hotel Schwarzwald Panorama near Baden-Baden in Bad Herrenalb is almost 100 percent sustainable. Lie back and enjoy wonderful views from the sun terrace; take time to savour the organically-certified slow food. schwarzwald-panorama.com/home



6



4

GREEN CITY HOTEL VAUBAN

It's so green

Even the wooden facade of the Green City Hotel Vauban in Freiburg is eco-friendly, with plants climbing enthusiastically all over it. In this hotel, guests enjoy sustainable 3-star service. The only thing missing? To save energy, there are no mini-bars in the rooms. green-city-hotel-vauban.de



More information

Additional listings for sustainable hotels, guest houses and holiday apartments are here: tourism-bw.com

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BIOHOTEL ROSE

The Alb's organic pioneer

Operating sustainably since 1950, the Hotel Rose was the Swabian Alb's first Bio Hotel (certified organic hotel). The rooms are oases of peace and well-being, with contemporary furnishing. Working with the farmers in the region, only the finest organic cuisine is served here. The Tress family also makes high-quality organic products that can be bought from their online shop. tress-gastronomie.de

The fog rolling in from Lake Constance is just what the apples need. It helps the trees to rest in winter. In the late spring, it stops the frost from damaging the blossom. In summer, it ensures the right humidity, helping the fruit to ripen in the sunshine. So the Röhrenbach family likes the fog! Erich and Evi Röhrenbach, and their daughter Lisa, love their home and growing apples. Father and daughter put the ripe apples in their baskets almost as carefully as if they were collecting eggs. At a snail's pace, they drive through the rows of apples, where dark nets protect the trees and fruit from hail storms, as well as from too much sun.

Erich Röhrenbach grows more than 10 varieties of apples. Special is the Gravenstein. Traditional and formerly very common in the region, it is juicy, with a great flavour and a spicy taste. But it is surprisingly delicate, does not always grow perfectly round and is sensitive to stress. The Röhrenbachs grow them as a hobby and pick them by hand.



Lake Constance: perfect for holidays and orchards



Lisa and her father Erich Röhrenbach picking apples

Apples

grown with love and care

A visit to the Röhrenbach family's
Apfelhof farm on Lake Constance

✍️ CHRISTIANE WÜRTEMBERGER 📷 DIETMAR DENGER



Many hiking and cycling trails run through vineyards and orchards



At the Apfelhof, the Röhrenbachs also have holiday apartments

The Apfelhof Bodensee, the Röhrenbach's farm, is in Kippenhausen. This hamlet near Immenstaad, west of Friedrichshafen is in Germany's second largest apple-growing area. It is a family effort in the best sense of the word. Everyone is involved; everyone loves the orchards; everyone pulls together.

But the family business encompasses far more than just apples. Their orchards produce pears, plums and cherries. Mum Evi's domain also includes six comfortable holiday apartments, with a sauna for guests. Daughter Lisa lends a hand everywhere, planning the marketing and thinking about new products. At a

small roadside stand with an honour system for payment, you can stock up on fresh fruit right from the farm. And if you want to learn even more about what goes on here, just come to one of the schnapps tastings in the beautiful, new distillery. Fruit brandies are another of Erich Röhrenbach's hobbies.

Apple cider for hot days on Lake Constance

Just selling apples, as father and daughter confirm, is simply not enough to make a living. So, the two of them are always dreaming up something new. Lisa recently had the idea for a cider made from Red Moon apples, a red-fleshed variety. The cider is low in alcohol and that makes it perfect for hot summer days on Lake Constance. Of course, it is best enjoyed with a view of the water. "I understand why so many people come here for their holidays," says Erich Röhrenbach, with enthusiasm. "The landscape is unique – and when you can see the Alps on a clear day, it is simply wonderful." He smiles and hands me an ice-cold apple cider. ■



To ensure the best flavours, we only use perfect fruit for our brandies and ciders."

Erich Röhrenbach, farmer

More about the Apfelhof

and holidays here:
apfelhof-bodensee.de

Lake Constance Apple Weeks

start in mid-September, with lots of fun events:
bodensee.eu

Be happy; go with the flow

Holidays on Lake Constance are all about the fresh, clear and wonderfully clean water. Get active on the surface. Or jump in and dive down into its mysterious blue depths. Doze on wooden decks, warmed by the sun. Try something new: surfing, surf kiting or wakeboarding; canoeing or kayaking; stand-up paddle boarding or scuba diving. Or how about a trip in a pedal boat? Or a steamboat cruise? One thing is certain: the lake provides balm for body and soul.



Special tip

SUP YOGA

Why not swap your yoga mat for an SUP, a stand-up paddle board? Combine training with meditation and getting closer to nature. And you even improve your balance!



Mainau has a Mediterranean look, created by the many exotic plants that thrive on the island

The Flower Island

When is a good time to visit Mainau? The answer is: anytime! The island on Lake Constance is fun for families year-round and a great destination for anyone who loves plants. In 2021, extra events are planned

This is the place to immerse yourself in nature. On the garden island of Mainau, the Flower Year starts with a million tulips and spring flowers. Rhododendrons and fragrant roses sweeten the summer months; come the autumn, over 11,000 dahlias provide splashes of colour. And in winter? Mainau is transformed into a magical, quiet yet sunny garden. Not far from Konstanz, this island on Lake Constance is a popular day out all year round. It is a perfect spot to forget everyday life, relax and enjoy the beauty and the peace of this lovingly-designed oasis of nature. Don't miss the palm house, the butterfly house and the arboretum. Exotic and rare trees have been grown here since the second half of the 19th century; today there are around 250 species.

Many are drawn to the island because they are interested in plants and gardens. Others are looking for relaxation. Families come because there is so much for youngsters to do. The Children's Land adventure playground offers Water World and Blumi's Lakeside World. There is a farm with a petting zoo and pony rides, while the insect garden provides information about the life of bees. And what little one wouldn't want to play in the specially-designed area for one to four-year-olds? Tip: On the treasure hunt, families can explore the island and solve puzzles with Blumi, Mainau's mascot. Find the treasure and win a reward!

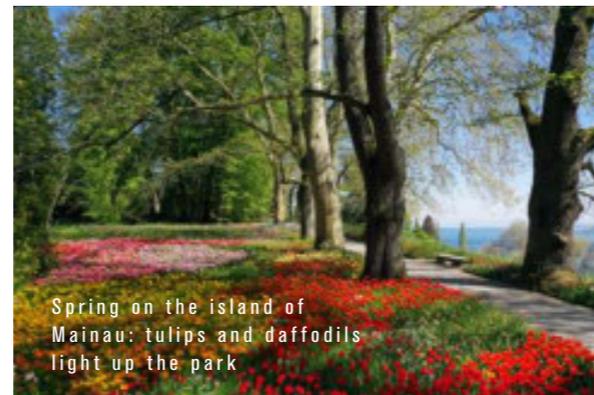
With its temperate micro-climate, the Lake Constance region is famous for its gardens. In 2021, the summer season

will be particularly exciting for gardening enthusiasts, with two major horticultural events: the Garden Show in Eppingen and the State Garden Show in Überlingen. ■



More information on Mainau

is here: mainau.de/en
and more garden tips here:
bodensee.eu/gardens



Spring on the island of Mainau: tulips and daffodils light up the park

GARDEN PARADISE



The Sophianeum is high above the Jagsttal valley

HOHENLOHE

Come in, the garden gate is open!

Anyone with green fingers enjoys looking at other people's gardens. And in the Hohenlohe region, northeast of Stuttgart, some 30 monastery, palace and private-home gardens have joined up to form the Hohenlohe Garden Paradise organisation. Members of this new network open their gates to visitors; some also run tours or workshops. One example is the Sophianeum in the Alte Hofapotheke in Langenburg (photo). Among other things, Renate S. Deck offers poetry tours. Find ideas for your own garden; peer at unusual shrubs, trees and designs. There is much to enjoy – and no weeding needed!

hohenloher-gartenparadies.de

EPPINGEN GARDEN SHOW

Summer, the city and you!

In the Kraichgau region, northwest of Stuttgart, the medieval town of Eppingen is firmly on the gardening map for 2021. That is because, from May 7 to September 12, it plays host to the 2021 Garden Show. The theme of "Summer, the city and you!" is reflected with diverse landscaping, a revitalised stream and a varied four-month programme of events and exhibitions – all in a revamped area of some 10 ha / 25 acres that is next to the old town. In this re-greening project, there will be plenty of new spaces, where you can relax outdoors. The Garden Show itself has an important focus on the environment, climate change and sustainability. But this is not a short-term endeavour; instead, this ambitious project will benefit Eppingen long into the future. gartenschau-eppingen.de



Eppingen is revitalising an area near the old town

The shepherd and his flock

Norbert Fischer looks after some 250 sheep on
his farm in Langenburg in Hohenlohe.

The shepherd uses their milk to make fine cheese
the traditional way, by hand

✍ ANNA MONTERROSO CARNEIRO 📷 UDO BERNHART



Norbert Fischer and
his flock, with Langenburg
Castle in the distance



“
**You can also make
 delicious ice cream from
 sheep’s milk.”**

Norbert Fischer, Langenburg



A first-rate hard
 cheese has to
 mature for six to
 12 months

The 250 sheep
 spend their days
 outdoors

Suddenly, it is no longer milk! It is cut up, swirled around for 20 minutes and even thrown up in the air. Norbert cuts the cheese with two special metal curd cutters, once across and once lengthways. This removes the whey from the curd. More and more stirring extracts more and more liquid, helping the cheese to solidify. To test whether the curd is firm enough, Norbert puts a couple of cubes in the palm of his hand and rolls them around. The consistency seems to be right; with a satisfied nod, the shepherd begins to fill the square cheese moulds with curd. In order to drive the last drops of whey out of the cheese, Norbert turns the small



Fischer’s flavours
 include raspberry,
 coffee and
 whey-ginger

moulds upside down, one after the other, with a loud bang.

So, how did Norbert learn how to make such good cheese? Where did he acquire the skills? The answer is simple: whenever he tasted a good cheese, he read all about its production and worked to recreate it, continuing until he got it right. In the past 30 years, he has added an aromatic pecorino, a soft camembert and strong blue to his cheese portfolio. All are handmade and originate in the green northeast corner of Baden-Württemberg. ■



More information

on sheep cheeses and travel ideas in northern Baden-Württemberg are here: schafskaese.com and hohenlohe.de

In a temper, she stamps her foot at him, throwing up a small cloud of dust. Unimpressed, Norbert Fischer looks straight into her angry eyes. But, with a little tuft of hay perched on her white curly head, she really doesn’t look very intimidating. “I suppose I’d better get out of your way,” Norbert says, with a chuckle, retreating a few steps and climbing over the wooden fence to get out of the enclosure. The old ewe, who has successfully chased Norbert away from her breakfast, digs her head into the haystack and begins to munch. She is not the only sheep to have hay stuck on top of her head. But no matter how much hay they eat, they will not go hungry. The lush meadows of Hohenlohe are all around.

Norbert Fischer’s bio-dynamic farm is located in the unspoiled countryside of the Hohenlohe. Northeast of Stuttgart, this region is known for organic farming. In the early 1980s, this native of Nuremberg leased a small farm in



Fresh hay in the stable; good cheese on the plate: everyone is happy

Langenburg, bought two sheep and started making cheese. Twenty years and 250 sheep later, he bought a large piece of land above the town and built a large barn, a cheese dairy, a farm shop and his house. Everything is made of wood and glass, with colourful meadows of flowers on the roofs and lots of love in every corner.

Mediterranean cheese from Hohenlohe

Now it is off with his black jacket and on with his white apron. Norbert walks into the warm, humid dairy. Today he is making Robiola, a fine Italian soft cheese that he sells at the weekly market. To do this, he heats the sheep’s milk, still warm from the morning milking, and uses rennet, an enzyme from the sheep’s stomach, to curdle the cheese. If the milk had known what to expect, it would have stayed in the sheep!



MOO ICE CREAM

Hay-milk ice cream in Hohenlohe

Rich in omega-3 fatty acids, hay milk is highly-prized. Marina Nina Sohl's cows spend the summer on nearby pastures around Kirchberg Castle in Hohenlohe, northeast of Stuttgart. In her bio-dynamic ice cream dairy, the hay milk is the main ingredient in her hand-made organic ices. Try the caramel with fleur de sel, the chocolate chili or the coconut blossom. moo.bio

GOOD FOOD TAKES TIME

Delicious bread, toothsome wines, yummy cheeses: great flavours are not created at the press of a button. Time is the added ingredient needed to produce truly memorable tasty treats on holiday

FRUIT BRANDIES

An Upper Swabian custom



Gerhard Fetscher is a certified brandy sommelier, who distils fine fruit brandies the old-fashioned way. From local orchards, he chooses heritage fruit varieties that have long been ignored by mainstream producers. Book a tasting of his single-variety pear and apple brandies at the Fetscher Distillery. It is at the Engel, his historic inn in Hosskirch, southeast of Stuttgart. gf-distillate.de



ORGANIC SAFFRON

A spice from the Swabian Alb

Aromatic, tart and pungent, saffron is a key component of rice dishes, seafood and desserts. Ninety percent of the world's production comes from Iran, but a tiny proportion is from the Swabian Alb, south of Stuttgart. In Sonnenbühl, Swabian saffron (crocus sativus) is grown without artificial fertilizers. alb-safran.de



BIO-DYNAMIC BREAD

Freshly baked in Musberg

A family of donkeys is part of the workforce at the Eselsmühle (Donkey Mill). In its eight wood-burning bread ovens, the age-old interplay of dough, wood, heat and stones results in outstanding bio-dynamic bread. But the bakery is right up to date and easy to find. Head for the Mühlenstube tavern in Musberg, southwest of Stuttgart. And meet the donkeys! eselsmuehle.com

5

MOUNTAIN CHEESE

Handmade in the Allgäu

Mountain cheese is the speciality at the Isny Käsküche dairy in Isny im Allgäu, northeast of Friedrichshafen. Species-appropriate cow husbandry and organically-grown feed produce the organic milk that is the main ingredient of cheeses, such as carefully-ripened Adelegger, Isnyer Ur-Bergkäse and Allgäu Lemon Pepper. kaeskueche-isny.de



More information

on products that "take time" can be found here: tourism-bw.com



SLOW BREWING

Beer in the Black Forest

The 230-year-old Rothaus Brewery delivers the Black Forest in a glass. In fact, Tannenzäpfle, their most famous brew, means pine cones! The flavours come from aromatic hops, malt and even spring water that are all local. Sticking to tradition, the brewery never uses accelerated ageing or forced fermentation. Rothaus is southeast of Freiburg. rothaus.de



Time out in the city

Find something new; enjoy the bustle:
on city breaks, you can do a lot in a short time.
But there are also quiet corners, where you
can catch your breath and slow down



1 MANNHEIM

Have a cup of tea in China

“Drink tea and forget the noise of the world,” is an old Chinese saying. Head for the Chinese garden in Mannheim’s Luisenpark, a green oasis on the banks of the River Neckar. In the tea house that is designed according to the Feng Shui philosophy, choose from 30 sorts of tea. Then sit back, sip and imagine you are in the Far East. visit-mannheim.de/en

3 BADEN-BADEN

The elegant spa



Your body relaxes in the warm thermal water; your eyes take in the elegant dome high above you. When it opened in 1877, the Friedrichsbad in Baden-Baden was Europe’s most modern thermal spa. Today, it is as charming and seductive as ever. The Roman-Irish programme is a progression taking in different temperatures, dry air and steam. How does that work? Find out by doing the 17-station, 3-hour treatment yourself. baden-baden.com

2 FREIBURG

Nature is all around

The historic city of Freiburg is wedged between France and Switzerland, next to the Black Forest (photo left). With its mild climate and unspoiled countryside right on the doorstep, it is the perfect spot to recharge your batteries in the HealthRegion Freiburg, where the wellness experts partner cutting-edge medicine with a holistic view of patients. Go for activities, relaxation or a combination of the two.

healthregion-freiburg.de/en



4 KARLSRUHE

The nature-friendly city

Explore this green city by bike. Karlsruhe NaturRADtours follow an easy and flat circular route around the city centre, linking conservation areas and green spaces. Pedal some or all of the 10 stages covering 48 km / 30 miles. Highlights include the palace park. karlsruhe-tourismus.de/rad



6 STUTTGART

Vine and wine

The Stuttgart Wine Trail is a great way to explore the vineyards on the hills that overlook the city. The circular route offers grand views, easy walking and the tranquility of rows and rows of vines with slowly ripening grapes. The highlight? The vista from the Württemberg Burial Chapel. stuttgart-tourist.de/en and wine-in-stuttgart



5 ULM

Green trails

150 years ago, Ulm's imposing fortifications were Germany's biggest defences. Today, you can walk along all or part of the massive ramparts, whose 12 km / 7 miles still surround the inner cities of both Ulm and Neu Ulm (the city on the far bank of the River Danube). Along the way, visit well-preserved historic buildings, as well as parks and green spaces. tourismus.ulm.de/en



7 HEIDELBERG

A monastic retreat

Close to Heidelberg, the Benedictine abbey of Stifft Neuburg overlooks the River Neckar. Here, the monks have set aside plain rooms for those, who are looking for secluded breaks or help on their spiritual path. Guests can join in the communal meals and services of prayer. The monastery also has its own inn and organic brewery. heidelberg-marketing.de/en



More information

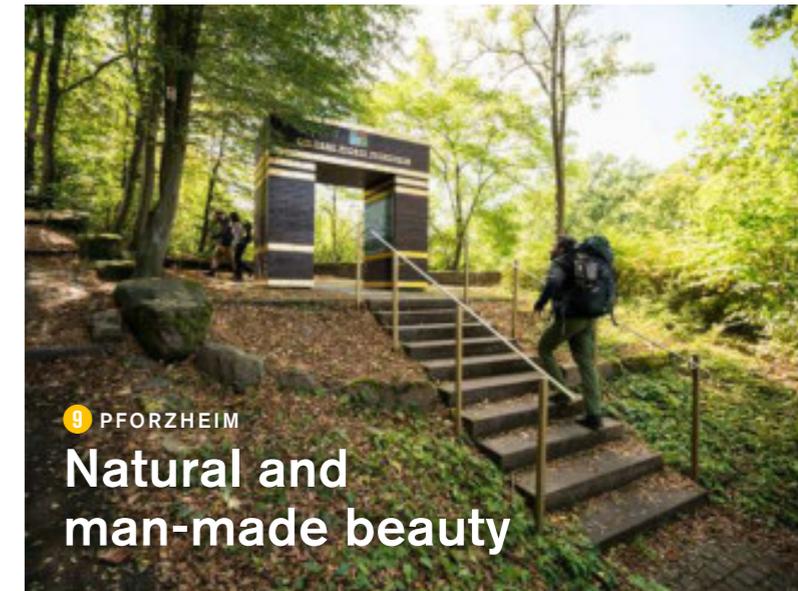
and travel ideas in these cities at tourism-bw.com/destinations/cities



8 HEILBRONN

Far from the madding crowd

Leave the stress of daily life behind and go on a journey of discovery at Experimenta, Germany's largest science centre. Visitors of all ages have room to join in experiments and tinker with technology to their hearts' content. Allow plenty of time to check out the 275 interactive hands-on stations, four creative studios, nine laboratories, an observatory and the Science Dome with its science demonstrations. experimenta.science/en



9 PFORZHEIM

Natural and man-made beauty

Want to combine city culture with quality hiking? Head for Pforzheim, the "City of Gold" with its world-class jewellery museum and long history of jewellery and watch making. Then choose between three important long-distance hiking trails that start here. The Westweg, Mittelweg and Ostweg all cross the Black Forest from north to south. If you don't want to go too far, stay within the city limits, where there are over 100 km / 60 miles of hiking and biking trails. All you have to do is shift down a gear ... pforzheim.de/en.html



Service & contact

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