

Süden

The Travel Magazine
for SouthWest Germany

Natural highs

Exploring the
Swabian Alb at
your own pace

Rockin' it out

Challenging
wall climbs on the
River Neckar

The wild woods

Rangers reveal
secrets of the Black
Forest National Park



THE SUNNY
SIDE OF
GERMANY.

BADEN-
WÜRTTEMBERG



26

Clean and green
The Black Forest National Park

Welcome to SouthWest Germany!

The German federal state of Baden-Württemberg is surprisingly wild. Our unspoiled landscapes range from dense forests and open meadows to gurgling streams in deep gorges. Green oases offer tranquility – even in our cities. There are also new ways to get out into the great outdoors. Breath-taking views and exciting microadventures: these are just some of the unforgettable experiences for the whole family. Have fun exploring sunny and wild SouthWest Germany!

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CLEAN AND GREEN

Exploring the heart
of SouthWest Germany

Give yourself a boost

More and more holidaymakers are renting e-bikes. You still have to pedal, but the motor provides a “boost” when needed – so grandparents can keep up with younger riders!

For the more adventurous, downhill mountain bikes are perfect for the specially-designed hill trails. Whether you take on the challenge of a bike park or go for a peaceful ride, cycling is a great way to get away from it all in the Black Forest, the Swabian Alb and in the northern region of SouthWest Germany.



Special tip

**HOLIDAYS ON
TWO WHEELS**

Fancy a touring holiday? SouthWest Germany's extensive network of well-marked, dedicated trails includes the scenic Kocher-Jagst Cycle Trail and the Rhine Valley Trail.

www.tourism-bw.com

Punting through a bird sanctuary

If you love birds, then the Taubergiessen Nature Reserve in the Rhine Valley is the place to go. Just make sure you have your binoculars and camera ready! These wetlands, near Freiburg, are among the last wilderness areas in Germany. Explore by boat, gliding silently through the water meadows. Look out for families of ducks and coots; spot grey herons, standing like statues on the shore. Swans often follow the boat because they know the skipper, Felix Sigg. He seems to know every bird by name! With his knowledge and some luck, you might see orioles and kingfishers. Tours are well worth it – even in winter.



Special tip

ORCHID MEADOW

In summer, see the Rheinauen Nature Centre's orchid meadow near Rust.

www.schwarzwald-tourismus.info/Media/Attraktionen/Naturzentrum-Rheinauen



Fly like a bird

Go up, up and away in the Black Forest on the Hirschgrund Zipline course. South of Freudenstadt in the wooded Kinzig Valley, seven ziplines whisk you up and over steep rocky slopes and across valleys, hills, streams and trees. Linked by picturesque paths and platforms, each zipline offers a unique experience.

The Kimmigberg offers a relaxed gliding experience; the Gründlebahn, 1,900 ft/570 m long and 83 m /275 ft high, is the longest zipline in Germany. Allow 2.5 to 3 hours to complete the full circuit.



Special tip

THE ESSENTIALS

The minimum age is nine.

The minimum weight is 90 pounds/40 kg; maximum weight 250 pounds/115 kg. Harness, helmet, carabiners and pulleys are all provided.
www.hirschgrund-zipline.de





**TRIPSDRILL WILDLIFE PARK:
50 different species**

Tripsdrill Wildlife Park, north of Stuttgart, is home to wolves and lynx, otters, bears and more. Children love the outdoor enclosures, where they can get really close to fallow and sika deer, petting and feeding them by hand. Chat to the falconers and watch thrilling flight demonstrations by birds of prey. www.tripsdrill.de/en/wildlife-park

Outdoor adventures

For little explorers and grown-up adventurers, for nature lovers and sunbathers, SouthWest Germany offers a huge range of outdoor experiences – by day and by night



EXPLORER'S BACKPACKS

**I spy with
my little eye**

**ZWEITÄLERLAND:
Two valleys equal
double the fun**

In the Black Forest, northeast of Freiburg, the Zweitälerland combines the unspoiled Elz and Simonswald valleys. This region is great for hiking; around Buchholz, follow wine trails through the vineyards. The outdoor fun ranges from paragliding to farm holidays, where kids can help the farmer. At Baumkronweg Waldkirch, Europe's longest tubular slide is a high-speed thrill ride, measuring 625 ft/190 m in length. www.zweitaelerland.de



"Oh, I am so bored..." Holidays with children are great fun; the challenge comes when the kids lose interest. SouthWest Germany has the perfect solution: rent an Explorer's Backpack (5 EUR) at tourist offices in the Black Forest, Swabian Alb and in the Lake Constance region. Inside you will find all the essentials needed to enable a curious mind to discover nature: a magnifying glass, binoculars, compass and even a net for poking around in a pond. Tons of fun! www.tourism-bw.com/experience/family-vacations



THE BLACK FOREST
**CAMPING IN THE
WILDERNESS**

A new – and special – experience is camping overnight in the Black Forest Nature Park. Deep in the woods, six official trekking camps have been set up, offering space for up to three tents, plus campfires and outdoor toilets. They are only accessible on foot and all equipment, food and water must be carried in by campers. Sites can be booked from May to October; the cost is 10 EUR per tent (2-3 people), per night. www.blackforest-tourism.com

EUROPA-PARK: RULANTICA

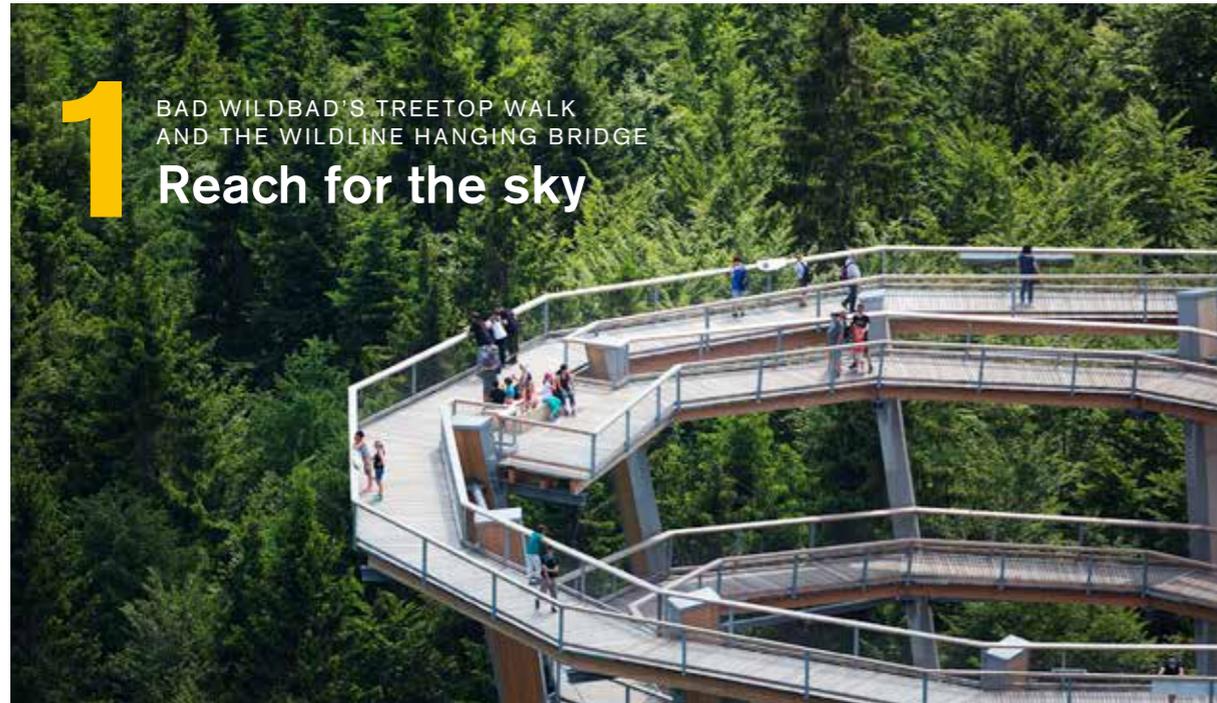
Water park thrills!

In November 2019, the vast new Rulantica water park opened at Europa-Park, the popular theme park in Rust, north of Freiburg. Featuring nine Nordic-themed areas, Rulantica has some 25 attractions, including 17 slides. Be brave and take on the Dugdrob & Vildfål AquaRocket slides; float along in the current in Vildstrøm; explore Rangnakor, a city on stilts. Order day tickets in advance online: tickets.rulantica.de



SENSATIONAL TREETOP VISTAS

Birds have the best views! To see what they see, head for these six spots, high above SouthWest Germany's forests



1 BAD WILDBAD'S TREETOP WALK AND THE WILDLINE HANGING BRIDGE
Reach for the sky

Enjoy grand views of the Black Forest on the Treetop Walk, which is 4,000 ft/ 1,250 m long. Follow the spiral boardwalk to the observation tower, 130 ft/ 40 m high. Then, for fun, ride back down on the slide! Linking Sommerberg Mountain to the Treetop Walk is the WildLine Suspension Bridge. At 1,250 ft/380 m long, it hangs 200 ft/ 60 m above the valley – and it does sway a bit! Located east of Baden-Baden. www.bad-wildbad.eu

SCHÖNBUCH TOWER 348 steps

A dramatic piece of modern architecture, the Schönbuch Tower (Schönbuchturm) stands 115 ft/35 m high. Built of wood and steel, it has three tiers that offer 360-degree views of the Schönbuch Nature Park, to the Swabian Alb and the Black Forest. Truly fabulous! Near Herrenberg, north of Tübingen, this is SouthWest Germany's oldest nature park. www.naturpark-schoenbuch.de/en/



REMSTALKINO Free tickets

Remstalkino means Rems Valley Cinema. That's because the Drei Riesen (Three Giants) viewpoint has 26 cinema seats. Sit down, relax and take in the views of vineyards, the Rems and Neckar Valleys and Stuttgart. Best of all, the show is free! Located in Weinstadt, northeast of Stuttgart. www.remstal.info



More information

Find more beautiful views at www.tourism-bw.com

NEW: BLACK FOREST NATIONAL PARK VISITOR CENTRE Treetop views



Opening in late 2020, the Black Forest National Park visitor centre is a wooden construction with an elegant design. Read the displays about the wild forest; take the open-air skywalk, high above the trees, to the angular viewing tower with its panorama. Located near Baiersbronn, southeast of Baden-Baden. www.nationalpark-schwarzwald.de/en



HIRSCHGRUND ZIPLINE Adrenalin rush

Germany's longest nature zipline, the Gründlebahn, soars at 1,870 ft/570 m over the Kinzig Valley. A real thrill ride, it is one of seven at the Hirschgrund zipline site. Reach speeds of up to 37 mph/60 kmph! Located south of Freudenstadt. www.hirschgrund-zipline.de



ELLBACHSEEBLICK Peer over the edge

Near the village of Kniebis, on the edge of the Black Forest National Park, the wheelchair-accessible Ellbachseeblick observation deck opens up glorious views of the Ellbach Valley and Ellbach Lake below. A real treat for the eyes! www.blackforest-tourism.com

Challenges great and small

The mountains and valleys of the Swabian Alb are fun to explore for a day, a week or a fortnight.

Go on foot or speed things up on bikes or e-bikes: two great ways to enjoy the natural but diverse landscape

✍️ FABIAN TEUBER 📷 GREGOR LENGLER



There are sweeping views from the Alb's steep rocky escarpment



Even Mother Nature cannot conquer the impregnable Reussenstein Castle

MOUNTAIN BIKING IN THE SWABIAN ALB

The sun has just peeked over the mountains of the Swabian Alb. The first pale rays light up the lush green meadows near Bad Urach, an hour southeast of Stuttgart. The trees still cast long shadows, but our day has already begun. We stand right on the edge of the Albtrauf, the steep rocky escarpment that is typical of this geological playground. We pause for a moment to enjoy the magic of the early morning calm. Then it is time to push on. Our goal? To cross the Swabian Alb in six days. Luckily, we are on e-bikes.

In German, this scenic cycle trail is called the Alb-Crossing. On the map, our route runs for 230 miles/370 km, from Aalen in the northeast to Tuttlingen in the southwest. So far, we have covered about half the distance. We get

“
The landscape is the star attraction”

Ursula Teufel, Swabian Alb Tourism

back onto our e-bikes and are off again. By the end of the tour, the elevation changes will have totalled some 23,000 ft/7,000 m. An impressive stat! High on the plateau, the trails are fairly flat; heading down into the valleys, they become steep, like a rollercoaster ride. Sometimes we puff and pant on long climbs; other times, we pedal fast on the flat, level trails. Then it is full speed ahead downhill, hurtling around fast bends with the wind in our faces and our hands gripping the brakes. The daily stages of 30 to 45 miles (50 to 70 km) are a real test of our fitness, matched by a real sense of achievement at the end of the day.

Along the Alb-Crossing trail, there is so much to see and do. In Aalen, the Limes Museum is all about the northern frontier of the Roman Empire; Teck Castle has connections with the British Royal Family; the film Sleeping Beauty was shot at Lichtenstein Castle; Hohenzollern Castle is the ancestral seat of the German Emperors; the Nebelhöhle Cave has amazing stalactites and stalagmites. As for Hohenneuffen Castle, this 16th century,

Great one-day and multi-day tours

Multi-day tours

- Albtäler Cycle Tour: 115 miles/186 km
- Danube Cycle Path: 126 miles/203 km
- Kocher-Jagst Cycle Path: 206 miles/332 km
- Neckar Valley Cycle Path: 228 miles/368 km
- Mountain Beer Tour: 70 miles/112 km

For more multi-day tours, visit www.schwaebischealb.de/rad/

One-day tours

- Donauebikeland Geo-Tour: 31 miles/50 km
- Castle Tour, with Neckar Valley: 29 miles/46 km
- Kornbühl Tour: 13 mile/20 km
- Lonetal Cycle Path: 25 mile/41 km

For more multi-day tours, visit www.schwaebischealb.de/rad/



On the high plateau, the route runs through green meadows



Along the way, bright red poppies are dotted among deep green fields



hilltop fortress is ideal for a short break, before snaking back down to a rural trail. To the left and right there are gnarled apple and cherry trees, plus sheep and horses. We hear the trill of crickets. Fields of wheat are dotted with swathes of red poppies. On we pedal: the surface changes yet again and our tyres crunch over gravel.

We relish the exercise, but don't want to be exhausted. That's why the e-bikes are perfect. Sitting high up in the saddle, we feel part of the unspoiled countryside. The Alb-Crossing route cuts through forest and meadows to open heath and passes gurgling brooks. Needles to say, SouthWest Germany's sun-shine doesn't disappoint along the way! ■

A blue X on a yellow background marks the Alb-Crossing

HIKE IN THE SWABIAN ALB

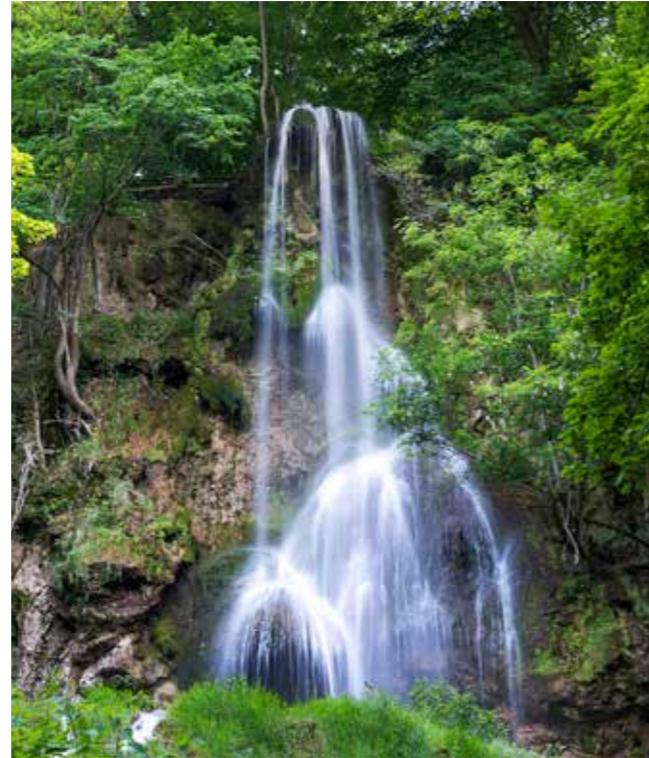
Our path meanders through a meadow full of wildflowers, then enters the dense forest, becoming narrower and narrower as we go deeper and deeper. From time to time, we catch a glimpse of the valley between the trees. In the silence, we clamber over the gnarled roots of mighty beeches. The view suddenly opens up, taking us by surprise. Diagonally across from us, sitting on a hilltop, is the imposing bulk of Hohenzollern Castle, somehow very close and yet very far away. Like a fairytale, almost unreal.

We are on the Albsteig hiking trail that runs diagonally across the Swabian Alb from Donauwörth in the northeast to Tuttlingen in the southwest. Pretty much in the middle of the 222 miles/358 km long route is the charming city of Ulm, with the tallest church spire in the world. This long-distance trail requires time: time to walk, time to appreciate the many facets of this unusual landscape, and time to be just with ourselves! We could complete the trail in a couple of weeks or so if we chalked up the miles every day. Unfortunately, we do not have that much time. But we do like the idea of completing the whole distance with a group of friends.

The Albsteig tends to follow the edge of the Traufkante, the Alb's steep and rocky escarp-

ment. Sometimes the path dips down dramatically; sometimes glorious panoramas open up. We come across wild streams and grazing sheep, barren heath and endless vistas. And there are hours of hiking through the forest. Anyone who wants to get away from the hubbub of daily life soon realises that the Swabian Alb offers something valuable: a renewed appreciation of unspoiled nature. Everything is so calm, and the landscapes change gradually. The scenery is sometimes beautiful, sometimes wild, but rarely bleak.

Bad Urach's market square is lined with half-timbered houses



Urach Waterfall, the most famous in the Swabian Alb, is 120 ft/37 m high



Views are spectacular from the steep slope of Mount Böllat, near Albstadt

Near Albstadt, there is a famous vertiginous rocky ledge that projects from the hillside. We stop for a break and pluck up the courage to climb the craggy rocks. It is well worth it for the phenomenal view. But this is just one of the stunning attractions along the way, from historic towns and impressive castles to palaces and prehistoric caves. It is important to allow time to stop and see these along the way, to take side trips for unexpected adventures, and to relax over hearty lunches in jolly inns. Or just to chat to a shepherd. We soon realise that to complete the whole Albsteig hiking trail, we need much longer than the suggested 15 days. That's for enthusiastic hikers; at a much more leisurely pace, it takes hikers about 25 days to complete. ■



Exploring the Alb on foot or on two wheels

 **The Alb-Crossing route crosses the Alb**, rising and falling 23,000 ft/7,000 m along the 228 miles/368 km between Aalen and Tuttlingen. Most of the route is technically easy, but good fitness levels are essential for what usually takes six days to complete.

 **The Albsteig follows Germany's HW1** long-distance hiking trail, created more than 100 years ago by the Swabian Hiking Association. Divided into sections between Donauwörth and Tuttlingen, the Albsteig trail's 222 miles/358 km are rated among the top trails in Germany.

More information For more on hiking and biking tours, as well as sights in the Swabian Alb, visit www.schwaebischealb.de



THE SHEPHERD'S TRAIL

Shepherd's footsteps

The Albschäferweg (Shepherd's Trail) reflects the 500-year-old tradition of raising sheep in the Swabian Alb. Shepherds still guard flocks on the heaths, in valley meadows and on the edge of forests, which protect rare animals and plants. Starting in Giengen an der Brenz, northeast of Ulm, the trail is well marked, with a white shepherd on a blue background. Parts of this 10-stage circular route (100 miles/158 km) are remote, so be sure to carry water and a picnic.

MORE GREAT HIKES

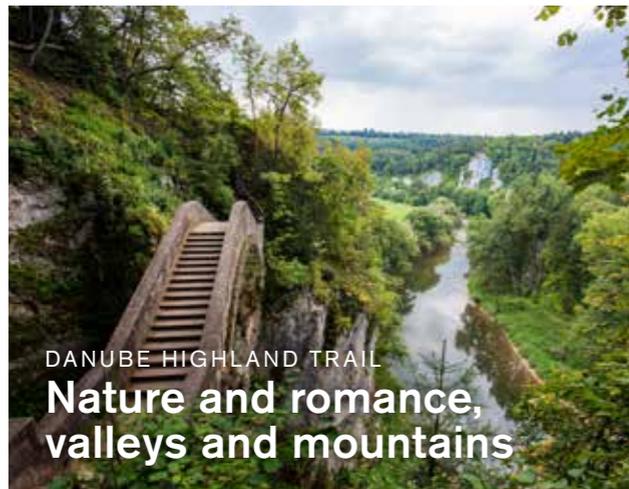
The hiking trails that criss-cross the Swabian Alb show off the region's diverse landscapes. From hour to hour and day to day, the spectacular views are always changing

DANUBE-ZOLLERNALB TRAIL

Variety guaranteed



East of Freiburg, this 10-day hike offers a range of attractions along its 100 miles/158 km: Beuron, with its abbey; a stretch of the Danube; historic towns; secluded valleys; rocky escarpments. At Lemberg Mountain, the route joins the spectacular.



DANUBE HIGHLAND TRAIL

Nature and romance, valleys and mountains

In the mountainous Danube back country, the Donauberlandweg (Danube Highland Trail) only covers 40 miles/60 km, but the four testing stages rise and fall 10,000 ft/3,200 m. Hikers cross the "roof" of the Swabian Alb and climb down to its "Grand Canyon", the gorge of the upper Danube. One of Germany's best trails. Located east of Freiburg.



More information

Find a range of hiking routes at www.schwaebischealb.de/wandern/fernwanderwege

MEDITATION TRAIL

Get more out of life

Step by step, you leave everyday life behind you on the Besinnungsweg (Meditation Trail). Walk the circular route in either direction. Its 32 miles/51 km lead through deep forest, across sunny meadows and pass small towns, such as Altsteusslingen, Dächingen, Frankenhofen, Granheim, Erbstetten, Mundingen and Ehingen. There are never-ending glorious views as you walk through this centuries-old cultural landscape, southwest of Ulm. Find relaxation, meaning and inspiration.



Lichtenstein Castle at the Swabian Alb

Living on the edge

Hessigheim is renowned for its vineyards and top-class wines. But great hiking and climbing, plus unspoiled scenery, make it extra special

✍️ CHRISTIANE WÜRTEMBERGER 📷 GREGOR LENGLER

Rock climbing on the Neckar River. Hessigheim is only an hour away from Stuttgart



Rock climbing high above the Neckar, with views to Besigheim

vy wraps itself around the trees that grow down in the small, shady gorge above the River Neckar between Stuttgart and Heilbronn. Juliana ties the safety rope to her waist belt, rubs her hands with magnesia climbing chalk and makes her way onto a small ledge. As her hands look for a grip on the smooth rock face, her friend Jens makes sure that her ascent is secure. The first route Juliana is taking today runs between two narrow limestone towers. The so-called Rosenstöckle, Rose Bush Route, gets its name from the wild roses that grow at the top.

It's Friday afternoon in the Hessigheimer Felsengärten, the Hessigheim Rock Gardens, which are a favourite among local rock climbers, as well as those from all over Germany. There is a crevice halfway up the cliff – this is the territory of rock climbers. "This is a great training area after work or at the weekend," says Jens, who, like Juliana, lives nearby. Jens is a winegrower who works in the Felsengartenkellerei wine cellars (see box) and also grows wine himself.

“
The smooth
rock makes
climbing
very
challenging”

Juliana,
rock climber

For him, rock climbing provides a physical test as well as relaxation: "I love to be outdoors where all I have to worry about is where I am putting my hands and feet next."

A natural balcony with views over the Neckar

Another part of Hessigheim's unique appeal is the special flora and fauna that can be found there. These rocks provide a habitat for rare lichens, grasses and flowering plants, many with exotic names, such as eyelash pearl grass, chalice weed, stoncrop, Carthusian carnation, noble gamander and spring cinquefoil. Birds like to nest in the limestone nooks and wall lizards also find homes there. At the foot of the cliffs, vineyards producing award-winning wines slope down to the River Neckar.

At the top, families with children and dogs stroll along the path that runs along the cliff edge. There is a grand, natural balcony that

Wines from the Neckar and Enz Valleys



Some 1,400 winegrowers in and around Hessigheim are members of the Besigheim Felsengartenkellerei wine co-op. Annually, they produce 9,000 tonnes (eight million kilos) of grapes on 1,750 acres (700 hectares) of sunny slopes along the River Neckar and the River Enz. Their high-quality wines are made from typical Württemberg grape varieties, such as Trollinger, Lemberger, Müller-Thurgau and Riesling. You can taste and buy these wines on site. The Felsengartenkellerei also offers fun activities, from guided tours and wagon rides to festivals. The photo shows oenologist Sebastian Häuser in the co-op cellar.

attracts sunbathers and walkers, who pause to take in views that stretch far beyond the river. As for the climbers, they are in the midst of it all, yet in total quiet. "Is the route free up there?" a voice calls out from below. "The way is clear, so you're good to go!" There are about 130 climbing routes to choose from, some up to 60 ft/18 m long. Ranging in difficulty from level 3 to level 9, there is scope for beginners and advanced climbers, as well as boulderers and mountaineers. From the early afternoon, the rocks are dotted with climbers in brightly coloured clothing. The relaxed mood spills over to spectators, who have found seats on the benches to watch the action. The rock gardens are in summer weekend mode. Locals insist



The Felsengarten (Rock Gardens) – a natural playground



The vineyards extend right up to the limestone cliffs

that it's just as nice as being on the beach. This comparison is not that far-fetched – this was once an ocean.

The Hessigheim Muschelkalk (German for shell-bearing limestone) consists of sedimentary rocks created during the Triassic period about 240 million years ago. Climbing has been popular here since the 1920s; in 1942, the Rock Gardens were declared a nature reserve. For Juliana and Jens, the Hessigheim Rock Gardens are the perfect destination after work. "Sometimes," says Jens, "we'll just climb one of the rocks and then relax, have a picnic and enjoy the views – it's so beautiful." ■



More information

The Hessigheim wine region is north of Stuttgart: www.tourism-bw.com/things-to-do/wine-dine/great-wine

Relax in the forest

Explore the Black Forest National Park
on a ranger-led tour; get in touch with nature
in this unspoiled treasure

 CHRISTIANE WÜRTEMBERGER  GREGOR LENGLER

Moss thrives on
branches in the wild
and often misty
Bühlerhöhe forest



The distinctive trail of a spruce bark beetle (left); a dung beetle (below)



Discover a variety of tiny natural wonders on ranger-led tours

The morning air is pleasantly cool, clean and fresh. The raindrops that fell last night sit like pearls on the leaves and pine needles. We are deep in the Black Forest National Park, east of the small town of Bühl. Hiking here is a new experience; we climb over fallen tree trunks, scramble along dried-up river beds and hear the song of the chaffinches. As park ranger Florian Hofmann leads us along a path through the wilderness, we can feel, smell and almost taste the forest. Yet, we are only about half an hour south of the elegant spa town of Baden-Baden.

A forest world in miniature

The moss on dead branches is soft, and if we look closely at the fallen tree trunks, we discover a forest world in miniature. There are meadows of lichen, tiny fir trees and even a strange type of fungus that was once used as tinder to start fires. Ranger Hofmann explains that this tree



nursery will grow dramatically in the future because at some point the dead tree trunk will collapse. That will allow the sun to penetrate to the forest floor, triggering new life. The Black Forest National Park is one of Germany's newest conservation areas. The only national park in SouthWest Germany, it is home to a natural woodland dating back over 100 years. Covering some 25,000 acres/10,000 hectares, the park opened in 2014 and protects forests, moors, mountain heathland and lakes. Its 40 square miles/100 square km cover two areas: one in the north around the Hoher Ochsenkopf/Plättig Mountain; the other further south, where the Ruhestein mountain pass is home to the National Park Centre (page 31). The motto is always stay on the trails and leave no trace.

Up on the plateau, the path snakes through the middle of the thicket, taking visitors close

Facts and Figures about the National Park:

Size: 40 sq miles/100 sq km

Sunny days per year: 165

Foggy days per year: 180

Most venomous animal: European viper

Fastest bird: Peregrine falcon 225 mph/360 km/h

Smallest owl: Pygmy owl 6-7 inches/16-19 cm long

Ranger walks: About 6 miles/10 km per day

First guided tour starts at 5am; the last at 10pm



Even a dead tree is full of life; just take a closer look

to the Bannwald, the protected forest that provides refuge for endangered species of plants, animals and fungi. Here, the sun pierces the dense green canopy, and small, dark leaves dance in the shafts of light. The forest wraps itself around visitors like a protective cloak. It is truly far removed from everyday life, from noise and worry, from jobs and to-do lists. This world has a different rhythm.

To enjoy this experience to the full, we are out with ranger Florian Hofmann. He points out tiny details: he encourages us to chew on sorrel (very sour) and to peer through binoculars into dark caves. He explains the feeding patterns of the eight-toothed spruce bark beetle, which leaves lacy patterns on the underside of tree bark. The national park is also home to pine martens, three-toed woodpeckers, pygmy and scavenger owls, as well as rare jays and plants.

“
In the National Park, we are just spectators”

Florian Hofmann,
park ranger

Although you seldom catch a glimpse of these uncommon forest inhabitants, that is not the most important thing. What is important is that, here in the heart of Europe, this wilderness still exists. It's not what you do in this forest, but rather what the forest does to you. The forest is never in a hurry. The forest offers you time to think, plus peace of mind and serenity. And untamed beauty. ■

More information

For information on events, tours and both the old and new national park centres, visit www.nationalpark-schwarzwald.de/en/

TAKE A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

Many areas of SouthWest Germany are protected – from dense forests, beautiful valleys and wild mountain meadows to orchards, lakes and clear streams. Visitors can enjoy unspoiled nature, as well as cultural landscapes



1 BLACK FOREST BIOSPHERE RESERVE Home to humans and animals

Six glaciers once met in this beautiful region, where low mountains, valleys, pastures and forests create a special eco-system that is home to a wide range of species, including rare animals and plants. From May 2020, children can learn fascinating facts about the animal inhabitants on a new wilderness adventure trail in the St. Wilhelm Valley, southeast of Freiburg. www.schwarzwald-tourismus.info

SWABIAN ALB BIOSPHERE RESERVE Castles and cattle

2



Orchards, heathland dotted with sheep and dense beech forests characterise the Swabian Alb. Perfect for a holiday, this is the place to see prehistoric animals, such as buffalo, and ancient Celtic relics. Enjoy the great outdoors by hiking or biking from castle to castle through fabulous landscapes. www.schwaebischealb.de/markenpartner/biosphaerengebiet



The stillness of Huzenbacher See, near Baiersbronn

3 BLACK FOREST NATIONAL PARK Into the wilderness



Visitors can experience the wild side of the Black Forest in the Black Forest National Park. Between Baden-Baden and Freudenstadt, some 40 sq miles/100 sq km have been set aside as wilderness. In late 2020, a new and architecturally astounding National Park Centre will open on Mount Ruhestein. Three large buildings will house a permanent, interactive exhibition that includes a virtual reality tour of the National Park. One section of the exhibition will even take you underground. www.nationalpark-schwarzwald.de/en/



Lovingly protected landscapes in seven nature parks

4 Schönbuch Nature Park This is a popular recreational area, with hiking and biking trails – and wildlife galore. Located north of Tübingen. www.naturpark-schoenbuch.de/en

5 Central and Northern Black Forest Nature Park From adders to grouse, many

endangered species survive among the bogs and limestone rocks of the park's 1,450 sq miles/3,755 sq km. And 50 accredited local producers serve local dishes!

6 Southern Black Forest Nature Park Germany's largest Nature Park (1,500 sq miles/

3,885 sq km) offers activities year round and is home to three of the Black Forest's highest peaks: the Feldberg, Herzogenhorn and Belchen. www.naturpark-suedschwarzwald.de



7 Neckartal-Odenwald Nature Park To the east of Heidelberg, this unspoiled landscape boasts rugged ravines, unusual rock formations and an endless forest. www.naturpark-neckartal-odenwald.de

8 Swabian-Franconian Forest Nature Park Northeast of Stuttgart, walk through forests, meadows and orchards, and discover ravines and caves.

Appreciate the park's diversity, go hiking or biking. www.naturpark-sfw.de

9 Stromberg Heuchelberg Nature Park "Woods. Wine. Wellness" is the motto of this reserve. Many of the region's sunny slopes are dotted with vines; valleys are full of orchards; tree-covered hills are home to rare wildcats. Located northwest of Stuttgart.



www.naturpark-stromberg-heuchelberg.de

10 Upper Danube Nature Park Rock climbers love the bizarre limestone formations



from the Jurassic period. As for the Danube Sink, this is where the river sinks through the earth into caverns. Located south of Tübingen. www.naturpark-obere-donau.de



More information

Visit www.tourism-bw.com and www.instagram.com/naturebawu using the hashtag #natureBaWu

Splash down!

At the heart of the Black Forest, the untamed River Murg offers gentle adventure for the whole family, from abseiling and hiking to river rafting

✍ ANNA MONTERROSO CARNEIRO
📷 GREGOR LENGLER



Thrills galore for the whole family on the River Murg

My pulse is racing. Almost in a trance, I climb over the guard-rail and hang on to the rope, holding it with both hands. I suddenly realise that I am on the wrong side of the railing. Below me, I can hear the sound of the river gurgling and children laughing. There is no turning back; I cannot change my mind now!

“When you’re ready, just let go!”

Clayton peers over the railing on the bridge and smiles at me encouragingly. I hold my breath, let go – and nothing happens. The belt holds; the rope holds; I am still breathing. Step by step, Clayton gently lowers me down from the bridge.

This is the start of an Adventure Day in the Black Forest, near the villages of Forbach and Raumünzsch, southeast of Baden-Baden. First up is the full-on adrenalin rush of abseiling



Every year, ice and water carve out a new riverbed”

Guide Clayton Prestigiacomo on the River Murg



down from a 50-ft/15-m-high bridge. Next up is a hike, scrambling along the rocky bed of the River Murg. The final challenge is river rafting. That all sounds adventurous, but it is, in fact, lots of fun for any children over the age of six. Today, Clayton is our guide. In his three years at Adventure World, he says, grinning broadly, he has not yet dropped any of his guests off the bridge. And his own children are also part of today’s group.

I then open my eyes and look down. Clayton’s little son is jumping energetically from one rock to the other, and his big sister is watching us from

Smiling above the abyss: editor Anna Monterroso high above the Murg



the shade. The other participants are nearby: a mother with her daughter and son. Together, they are peering at their camera screen, trying to capture the best possible photo. There are so many down here. The Murg tumbles over red sand-stone and granite. Sometimes the rocks are huge boulders; other times, they have been reduced to pebbles in the riverbed. To the right and left, maple and ash trees spread out their leaves, providing cool shade.

“If you get wet, it’s your own fault”

Down by the Murg, Clayton shows us the best and safest route along the riverbed, helping us on slippery rocks and telling us all about the river and its inhabitants. We learn that this is home to the yellow-bellied toad and the grass snake. The Murg is only 50 miles/80 km long; that’s almost as long as our hike feels. But Clay-

ton says we have barely walked half a mile/ 1 kilometre. After the hike, we drive to Forbach, which is 3 miles/6 km away. Here we relax and have lunch in the Adventure World beer garden. Next up is a thrill ride: the river rafting session! Equipped with life jackets, helmets and paddles, we assemble at the entry point. Here the water is calm and the river is wide, but after a few minutes, the river narrows, the current picks up speed and swirling rapids add to the excitement. Our instructions are clear. Kneel down; let the front man do the steering; always listen to the helmsman.

In theory, that sounds easy. But as soon as we kneel down in the craft, we forget everything. We all paddle like mad, we bump into rocks and, at times, even go backwards. After a few minutes, we go ashore and pull our vessel onto the river bank. Then we carry the boat back to the start and do it all again. We

Listen to the River Murg as it rushes round and over the rocks



Above: Hopping from stone to stone on the riverbed

Below: Beautiful ferns grow along the river

can have as many goes as we want, as long as we have the energy and are having fun. And we have plenty of both!

At the end of the day, as we peel off our life jackets and wetsuits, my question is: “Were you scared when you did the abseiling?” “No!” was the loud and unanimous response from Clayton’s children. Their courage was impressive. But I am also proud of myself. I realise that my answer is also: “No”. Even though it is a little quieter. ■

More information

Detailed information about Adventure World is available at www.murgtal-arena.de;

More on the Black Forest is available at www.blackforest-tourism.com/



MONBACHTAL VALLEY Family friendly

The wild, romantic River Nagold provides a moderately difficult hike for all ages. From Bad Liebenzell station, the circular route (7 miles/11 km) follows the stream that meanders through the Monbachtal Gorge. Think moss-covered rocks and fallen tree trunks, jagged rock walls and rare plant life, waterfalls and stepping stones. Families with children love the nature reserve.
www.wandern-schwarzwald.info

GREAT GORGES, WILD ADVENTURES

Tens of millions of years ago, ice and water carved out deep gorges in the Black Forest landscape. Hiking through ravines today is like taking a geology lesson



RAVENNA GORGE Narrow and steep

Hike the 6 miles/10 km in and out of the Ravenna Gorge; your reward is seeing the Great Ravenna Fall (50 ft/ 16 m). Crossing the lower part of the gorge you will find the Ravenna Bridge, where a romantic Christmas market is held beneath the arches. Nearby there is a 12th-century chapel and the Hofgut Sternen inn, with its impressive visitors' list dating back centuries. Located southeast of Freiburg. www.hochschwarzwald.de



GAISHÖLL WATERFALLS Up, down and all around



A lot is packed into this walk, a round trip of 3 miles/5 km: 13 bridges and 225 steps; huge rocks and boulders; a 650-ft/200-m change in altitude. Don't miss the dancing waterfalls of the Gaishöll Gorge. In the Northern Black Forest, the trail starts at the Zum Alde Gott restaurant in Sasbachwalden, south of Baden-Baden.
www.sasbachwalden.de

GAUCHACH GORGE 360-degree views

The Gauchach stream lends its name to the Gauchach Gorge, nicknamed the "little sister" of the Wutach Gorge. Cutting deep into the limestone, this narrow ravine is home to a rich variety of flora and fauna. A round-trip hike of 3.5 miles/5.6 km takes in several waterfalls. Start from Mundelfingen, southeast of Freiburg, where the trailhead car park offers magnificent panoramic views of the Swabian Alb.
www.hochschwarzwald.de

+

More information
Other great hiking experiences await you at www.schwarzwald-tourismus.info

SASBACHWALDEN



Who knew that hiking could be so romantic?

The schnapps is cooled naturally in mountain spring water

With vineyards and orchards, the landscape is beautiful



The Schnapps Distillery Trails

Dedicated to schnapps, the Schnapsbrunnenwege are the world's most unusual hiking routes. Along Black Forest paths, ten "schnapps fountains" offer hikers free samples of locally distilled spirits

"If cars need petrol and horses need oats, what do hikers need?" is a local joke. The answer is an occasional pick-me-up. As well as being the birthplace of recreational hiking, the Black Forest is renowned for its small-scale family distilleries. These transform locally grown apricots, cherries and apples into schnapps, world-class fruit brandies. Around Sasbachwalden, south of Baden-Baden, the Schnapps Distillery Trails (Schnapsbrunnenwege) typify traditional hospitality. Along the paths, bottles of schnapps cool naturally in the cold, clear, mountain spring water of the "schnapps fountains". Help yourself to free samples or pay a small fee for other drinks, such as liqueurs and ciders. There are also soft drinks for children.

With four different climate zones, the Sasbachwalden region is a popular holiday destination. The network of hiking trails criss-crosses the glorious landscape, where some peaks stand over 3,000 ft/1,000 m tall. The two schnapps trails

start in Sasbachwalden. Allow two hours for the northern loop (4 miles/7 km) and four hours for the southern loop (7.7 miles/12 km).

Strategically located at beautiful vantage points, the fountains offer hikers an excuse to stop, enjoy the views and have a sip of the local schnapps. The best time to visit? Locals recommend sultry summer evenings, when the sun is setting behind the Vosges Mountains to the west. But the orchards are beautiful in spring when the fruit trees are in bloom, while in autumn, the vineyards are a tapestry of colour. ■



More information

Find tips for hikers, schnapps lovers and the Schnapps Distillery Trails at www.sasbachwalden.de

SPICE UP YOUR HOLIDAY WITH MICROADVENTURES

You don't have to go to the ends of the earth for memorable experiences and a real buzz. SouthWest Germany offers thrills for all the family. Here are six microadventures that are easy to build into a holiday



CANYONING IN THE THE FALKENSTEIN CAVE

Underground adventures



1

PARAGLIDING TANDEM FLIGHTS Together in the air

After taking a few quick steps down the hill, the paraglider lifts off, carrying you and your pilot up into the air. This is an unforgettable adventure, flying high above the glorious Black Forest. As pilots are specially trained with tandem flight permits, you will be safe and secure. Prices start at 105 EUR, including equipment and insurance. www.luftzeiten.de



2

ALBTAL. ADVENTURE. TRACK Testing trekking

The Albtal. Adventure. Track is a rugged, cross-country hiking route, with two day-long stages in the Northern Black Forest. This is a tough challenge along pristine trails that stretch for 30 miles/47 km between Bad Herrenalb and Marzell, northeast of Baden-Baden. www.albtal-tourismus.de

3

Near Reutlingen, the famous Falkenstein Cave has underground streams, which are perfect for canyoning between 1 April and 30 September. With experienced guides, adventurers from the age of eight can scramble, climb, abseil and swim deep within the Jurassic lime stone rocks of the Swabian Alb. Helmets, waterproof lights and wetsuits are provided. www.cojote-outdoor.de

PANNING FOR GOLD ON THE RHINE Eureka!

Gold has fascinated mankind since the beginning of time. So, why not try to strike gold yourself? Learn how to pan for gold using age-old techniques. It's fun for the whole family! In Neuenburg am Rhein, southwest of Freiburg. www.goldsucher.de



6

MICROADVENTURES

SURVIVAL CAMP NORTH THE BLACK FOREST

Outdoor adventures

They call it "Nagold on the Iceberg", a survival camp run by expert guides – in winter! First, you hike into the camp in the forest; all skills are taught, from making a proper fire to spending the night outdoors. Think sunshine, blue skies, dry air and ice-cold temperatures. Only bookable by request for groups up to 12 people, this is an experience like no other. Located west of Tübingen.

www.hochseilgarten-nagold.de



4



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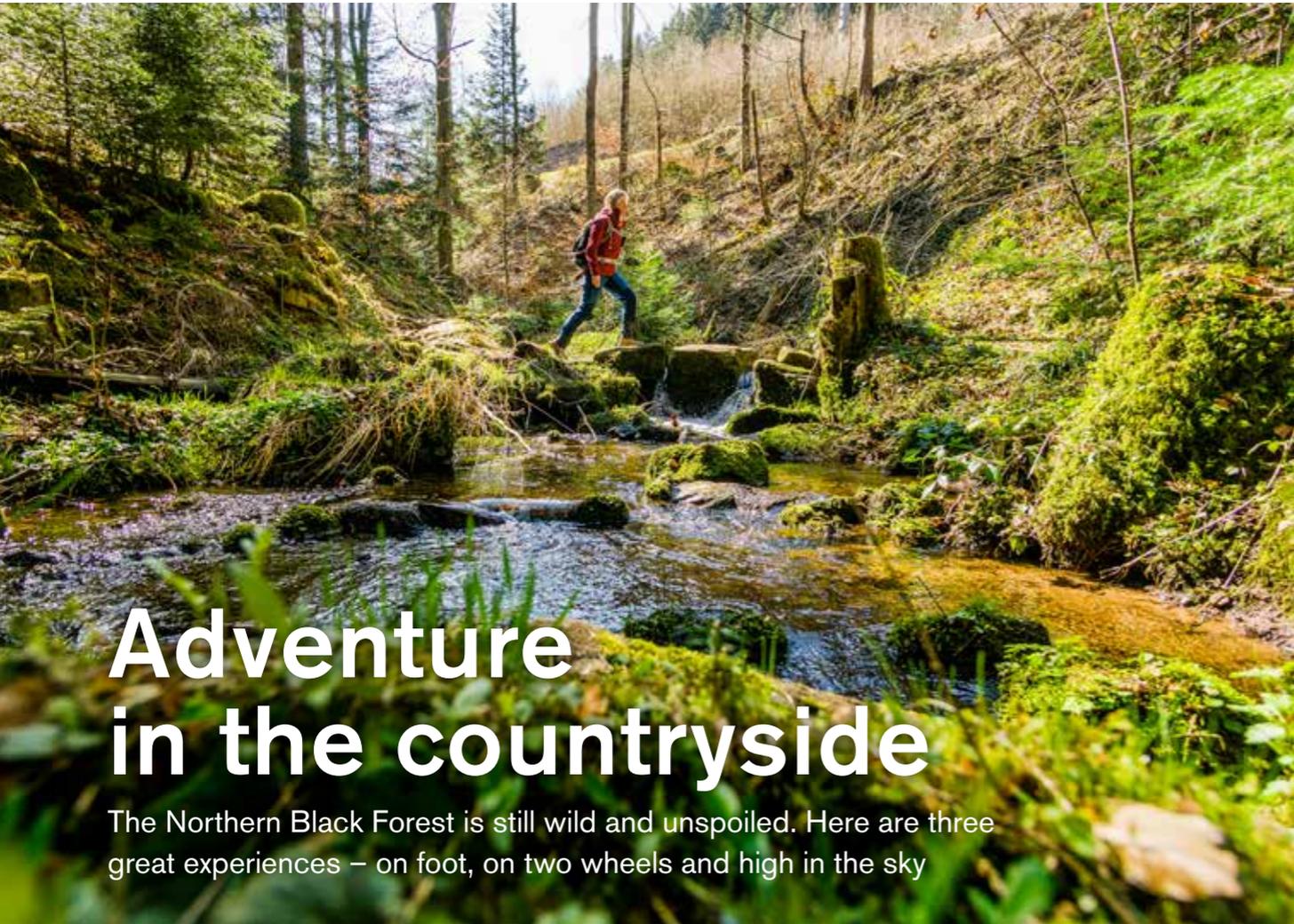
TRAILSURFERS MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS FOR ALL Legal in the valley

You don't have to be a professional mountain biker to ride the trails in the Bottwartal Valley, near Marbach. On properly-tuned mountain bikes and wearing the right protective gear, you can enjoy downhill adventures that are rated as "legal". The Baden-Württemberg Trailsurfers' philosophy is to create trails that are in harmony with local communities: that's what makes them "legal". Located north of Stuttgart. www.trailsurfers-bw.de



More information

For more microadventures in SouthWest Germany, visit www.tourism-bw.com



Adventure in the countryside

The Northern Black Forest is still wild and unspoiled. Here are three great experiences – on foot, on two wheels and high in the sky

44 MILES/70 KM IN THREE DAYS

A circular hike from Calw

The Stiefelreise is a circular route, west of Stuttgart, which links Calw, Sprollenhaus and Schömburg. Over three days, you will cover 44 miles/70 km, walking through a beautiful landscape that includes valleys, forest and bogs. Start in Calw. The birthplace of author Hermann Hesse also boasts half-timbered buildings and an ancient monastery. Day one is from Calw to the small town of Sprollenhaus (16 miles/26 km). Start day two by climbing up to the Wildseemoor Nature Reserve, Germany's highest raised bog. Boardwalks over the peat lead you to the Lake Wildsee (see photo). Then, it's on through SouthWest Germany's largest protected forest and across the Mount Sommerberg. Continue down into the handsome spa town of Bad Wildbad; finish the day in Schömburg. On day three (10 miles/17 km), the route

passes through the Schweinbachtal Valley to Hirsau, where you can explore the ruins of the monastery. Finish back in Calw. Packages for this hike include two nights' accommodation and luggage transfer.



The Wildseemoor Nature Reserve has Germany's largest highland moor

NORTHERN BLACK FOREST



ON TWO WHEELS

Mountain biking heaven

The Wanderhimmel is a popular network of hiking trails around Baiersbronn, offering 340 miles/550 km of outdoor fun. Now this "hiking heaven" is also a mountain biking heaven, with 11 tours, totalling 250 miles/400 km, criss-crossing the heart of the Black Forest National Park. Steep climbs provide the challenge; winding downhill runs provide the thrills. About 60 per cent of the Black Forest National Park is around Baiersbronn. For wide forest roads and single-track trails through untamed forest, check out Tour 3. Keen cyclists love the wide grinds and tree-free heath-land of Tour 4, while the glacial lakes of Tour 1 and bubbling waterfalls on Tour 9 call for photos. These well-signposted tours range between 9 and 50 miles (13 and 81 km) and are graded for different ability levels. Sixty-three per cent of the signposted trails are used by hikers as well as bikers, so it's important to take care on tight bends and fast descents. Special experiences include themed, guided bike tours. For example, the gourmet tour (25 miles/40 km) goes hut-to-hut, with stops for tasty treats.



MURGTAL VALLEY ROCK CLIMBING

Forbach's famous ascents

The Murgtal, the valley of the River Murg, is guarded by dramatic rock formations made of red sandstone, granite and gneiss. And in the area around Forbach, these offer fun rock climbing experiences for all levels, from beginner through to advanced. Particularly popular with families are the Gausbacher Strassenfelsen, the cliffs that can be climbed via 37 different routes. More demanding are the Eulenfelsen (Owl Rock) and the via ferrata Graffiti Wall and Pumprisse. You will be rewarded with great views of one of the Black Forest's deepest and largest valleys!



More information

More Information to hiking trails is available at: www.blackforest-tourism.com/discovery/hiking

GO ON SAFARI IN SOUTHWEST GERMANY

Explore SouthWest Germany's natural world. Spot kingfishers on the River Nagold and migrating birds on Lake Constance; herd Swabian Alb sheep and see extinct Ice Age mammals. The variety is extraordinary!



KINGFISHER TRAIL

At home on the water

In Germany, the number of kingfishers is in decline. But a good place to look out for this fast-paced hunter is southeast of Baden-Baden on the Kingfisher Trail in Seewald, near the Nagold Dam. You have to be very close to slow-running, still or even stagnant waters – and you must be very, very patient. The reward could be a glimpse of shining turquoise-blue plumage flashing past on a low level dive.



BIRDWATCHING ON LAKE CONSTANCE

Just passing through?

Birdwatchers love Lake Constance, where they can spot some 300 species during the year, from black-necked grebes and lapwings to red-crested pochards of the duck family. One of the best places is the Wollmatinger Marsh wetlands on and around Reichenau Island. www.bodensee.eu.



ICE AGE SAFARI EXHIBITION MANNHEIM'S REISS-ENGELHORN MUSEUMS

Face to face with big mammoths

In 2020, young and old can journey back through time in Mannheim's World Cultures Museum. They can discover the world as it was between 35,000 and 15,000 years ago. Even better, they can get up close to mammoths, cave lions and giant deer – the big beasts of the last Ice Age. From 20 September. www.rem-mannheim.de/en/



PRIMEVAL MEADOWS

A quarry full of life

Near Blaubeuren, southeast of Stuttgart, a disused quarry has been transformed into a fascinating biodiversity project, run by Heidelberg Cement. As Taurus cattle (like the aurochs, the ancestor of domestic cattle) and Konik horses (semi-feral primitive horses) graze, they maintain a habitat that supports other rare animals and plants. There are three observation points. www.quarrylifeaward.com

SHEPHERD FOR A DAY Flocking to the Swabian Alb



Do you fancy looking after 750 ewes and lambs? You can spend a day or so with shepherds from the Höfel & Braun flock near Messstetten, southwest of Stuttgart. Offered from early April, when the sheep head for spring meadows, part of the experience is to follow them as they move from pasture to pasture. Prices start at 120 EUR for adults, 30 EUR for children. www.schwaebischealb.de/attraktionen/der-wanderschaefer



More information

For more trips with a difference in the great outdoors, visit www.tourism-bw.com

Take a different perspective

On Lake Constance, in Lake Constance, high above Lake Constance: every viewpoint opens up new perspectives. And we have tried them all, from beginner's courses in sailing and scuba diving to sightseeing in an airship

 FABIAN TEUBER  DIETMAR DENGER

Lake Constance is a natural playground for water sports

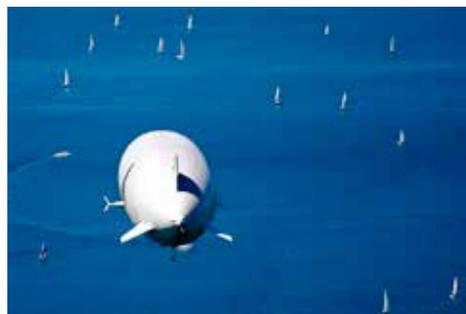


Sailing is fun for all and a great way to explore Lake Constance



"Is the wind about to pick up?"

A Zeppelin airship, high above Lake Constance, provides a totally different view of the world. At the airfield, passengers are ready and waiting, as the Zeppelin hovers and then lands gently. As one returning passenger steps out, one of us climbs aboard, maintaining the weight and balance. This well-practiced manoeuvre is all part of the Zeppelin experience. Soon, the airship takes off again with its new load of passengers. Pilot Marco Hollerer describes his craft as a hybrid, a mix of aircraft, hot air balloon and helicopter. Zeppelins glide silently through the air with ease, perfect for sightseeing flights over one of Europe's most beautiful lakes.



From a Zeppelin airship, high above Lake Constance, you can see four countries and the snow-tipped Alps

There are only five airships in the world. Two are based here in Friedrichshafen, where they were invented a century ago: the first Zeppelin maiden flight was in 1900. Other than the name, today's airships have little in common with that innovative machine. The design and propulsion have changed; the "envelope" is filled with helium rather than hydrogen. In the spacious gondola, each of the 12 passengers has a window seat; 1,000 ft/300 m above Lake Constance, the breathtaking views take in four countries and the snow-tipped Alps.

Next, I want to get out on Lake Constance itself, so I take a sailing lesson. At first, there is hardly any wind. Then, our instructor, Carola Habenicht, points to the water's surface: "See those ripples? The breeze is picking up." Moments later, the sails fill and our boat gathers speed. Carola teaches us the basics, from nautical terminology to how to set sail. And we learn another lesson. Although Lake Constance is big, it doesn't go on forever. Eventually, we have to turn around. As we return to base, there is time to chat. "Once you are on the water, the stress of everyday life fades away," says Carola, who used to sail competitively. She reckons that Lake Constance is perfect for all levels of experience, from beginners to advanced sailors, who relish the challenge of frequent and rapid changes of wind and weather. As for the scenery, there are so many lovely harbours and towns, plus orchards and spectacular mountains. No

Explore the fascinating underwater world of Lake Constance

wonder Lake Constance hosts top events on the international yachting calendar, such as the long-distance Rund Um race and the century-old International Bodenseewoche sailing week.

Finally, we decide to explore beneath the surface of Lake Constance, underwater on a scuba diving course. It takes time to put on the gear: the wetsuit, dive mask, snorkel and scuba tanks. After practising in shallow water, I become bolder. I find myself staring at a pile of shells 15 ft/5 m down. "Lake Constance is often underestimated," says Maren Moldon from the Tauchteam Bodensee diving school. "It has excellent waters for diving, both varied and demanding." There are also spectacular underwater cliffs and a sunken paddle steamer, plus giant pike and catfish. Close to the shore, even the sticklebacks look special to beginners like

“
**Out on
the water,
stress
levels drop
at once”**

Carola,
sailing instructor

me. Maren's tip? First-timers, who have never dived the lake before, should always book a local guide. That way, they get to discover the lake's special underwater secrets, from those awesome cliffs to that mysterious wreck. ■

Three views of Lake Constance

Radolfzell's Wassersportzentrum (sailing) and Herberlingen's Tauchteam Bodensee (diving) offer taster courses. Zeppelin flights take off from Friedrichshafen.

More information: www.bodensee.eu/en

Überlingen's green side

Gardening is a popular passion in Lake Constance's town. Expect more gardens at the 2020 Garden Show – even floating on the lake



Left and top:
The Uferpark
on the lake

Above: Handsome
old houses
in Überlingen

Lake Constance has a mild, sunny climate that is perfect for gardening. No wonder Landesgartenschau 2020, Baden-Württemberg's annual state garden show, takes place in Überlingen, from 23 April to 18 October. Although this is the first time the festival has been held in the Lake Constance region, this historic town is known for its lovingly cultivated gardens and historic parks with ancient trees.

The town's municipal garden was created back in 1875. This is now rated as one of the most important botanical attractions in the area. Many of the original trees still stand; Mediterranean and exotic plants thrive; the winding paths, flowery arbours and rock gardens are soothing. And connecting all the town's green spaces is the Gartenkulturpfad, the Garden Culture Trail (2.5 miles/4 km). Along the way there are historic houses, St. Nicholas Minster and the Renaissance city hall.

In 2020, the garden show will have several exhibition areas: the new 15-acre/6-hectare Uferpark; the villa gardens

with a new conservatory and floating gardens on the lake; an old church, with floral exhibitions changing every 14 days; a special rose garden and viewing tower; the Menzinger Gardens with allotments, viticulture and wonderful views of the lake and the old town. As for the wide-ranging programme of events, many will be held on the tempo-rary lake stage in the Uferpark. The whole of Überlingen has been revamped, with a new waterfront promenade and newly planted flower beds. In 2020, this city marks its 1,250th anniversary: what a way to celebrate! ■



More information

Überlingen State Garden Show;
23 April to 18 October, 2020
www.bodensee.eu/en

On Mainau, the focal point is the Baroque palace



Island in the sun

Lake Constance has two contrasting islands – both are historic and beautiful. Mainau is famous for its flowers and trees, while Reichenau is known for its ancient monastery

Mainau Island is like a jewel floating on Lake Constance. A few minutes northeast of Konstanz, this tiny island is only two miles/three km in circumference, but it truly is a botanical paradise, with its own devoted team of gardeners. The flower-filled park and gardens, which are open all year round, are centred on the 18th-century Baroque palace and a collection of magnificent trees, many of which are more than 150 years old. From mid-March to late October, the Mainau Flower Year progresses week by week from thousands of tulips to hundreds of rhododendrons, followed by fragrant roses, perennials and dahlias. In summer, palm trees and citrus shrubs provide a Mediterranean feel. There is also one of Germany's largest butterfly houses, a stimulating, specially designed children's adventure playground and an array of good restaurants.

Then there is Reichenau. Crossing the causeway to this peaceful monastic island takes you back in time. Only three miles/five km long, it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, noted for its Benedictine monastery. Founded in 724, it became one of the great medieval intellectual and cultural centres of Europe. There are also three village churches, built between the 9th and 12th centuries, as renowned for their early medieval architecture as for their wall paintings.



Get to the island by boat or car, then take time to walk or cycle. Islanders are known for growing their own vegetables. Located just west of Konstanz. ■

Reichenau:
St. Peter and
Paul Church is
1,000 years old



More information

Discover more about Mainau Island at www.mainau.de/en and Reichenau Island at www.bodensee.eu/en



1

BLACK FOREST CAMPING
The call of the wild

Southeast of Freiburg, Lake Schluchsee is nestled deep in the Black Forest. Here, in a quiet corner of the woods, couples can stay in comfy places that are unusual – and fun! Perhaps in Gisela, an old ski gondola. Or in Alfons, a typical tepee. Prices start at 80 EUR per night. You can also spend the night in your own tent or camper van.
www.blackforest-tourism.com/Media/Attraktionen/Youth-Campsite-Schluechtseewinkel

DID YOU SLEEP WELL?

Be adventurous, even when you are asleep! In SouthWest Germany, you can snooze in tree houses and tepees or hang out in a tree. Here are six fun places to sleep outdoors

EUROPA-PARK: CAMP RESORT
Out in the Wild West



3

Howdy! If you want to travel back to the Wild West, book in to Europa-Park's 458-bed Camp Resort near Rust. Adventurous mums, dads and kids can sleep in log cabins, tepees or even covered wagons, with comfy bunk beds and mattresses. Eat in the Silver Lake Saloon, and enjoy action-packed Wild West shows during peak season.
www.europapark.de/en

2



HANG OUT TOGETHER
Rock yourself to sleep

Get up close and personal with the tree tops by sleeping in a suspended tent! Try it near Schenkenzell in the Black Forest, northeast of Freiburg. Overnight stays for two include the use of a rustic shelter, a sun deck and a basket of local tasty treats. 165 EUR per person.

SLEEPING OUTDOORS



RENTHAL TREEHOUSE HOTEL

Vineyard views

Perched above the hillside with panoramic views over the vineyards, the four cosy log cabins of the Huber family's Baumhaus Hotel are near Oberkirch-Bottenau, south of Baden-Baden in the Black Forest. Great for families, individuals or couples. Starting at 120 EUR per night, including a breakfast buffet and a visit to the sauna.
www.schwarzwald-baumhaushotel.de

4

5

HOFGUT HOPFENBURG
Home, sweet home

A shepherd's wagon, tepee, yurt or even a circus wagon: Hofgut Hopfenburg offers sustainable accommodation with a difference! Or, stay in your own tent, motorhome or caravan. This former farm overlooks orchards and the Beutenlay Nature Reserve, near Münsingen and the Swabian Alb Biosphere Centre. Located west of Ulm.



More information

For unusual and unique places to stay, visit www.tourism-bw.com



6

SUNNY TREE HOUSES ON STILTS
Sleep in the tree tops

This romantic "tree palace" has seven sunny tree houses set high on stilts at the edge of the forest, near the village of Rosenberg. There are no kitchens, but breakfast is brought to you on request. Listen to the silence; relax on the sun terrace; explore the surrounding countryside. Located northeast of Stuttgart.

Here be giants!

With tall sequoias, delicate magnolias and rare pine trees, the 19th-century Exotic Forest was a rich man's dream. Weinheim's residents still benefit

Strolling through the Exotic Forest right outside the Palace Garden is like exploring four continents

📷 FABIAN TEUBER 📷 DIETMAR DENGER

Up to 200 ft/60 m tall, the giant trees look as if they can pierce the sky. Through the tree tops, the sun lights up the soft, fibrous bark on the sequoias; their trunks are criss-crossed with deep furrows. They bear witness not only to their extraordinary age, but also to the fierce heat and freezing cold, wind, rain, snow and ice that they have withstood over the past 150 years. On a tour of Exotenwald Weinheim, the town's arboretum of



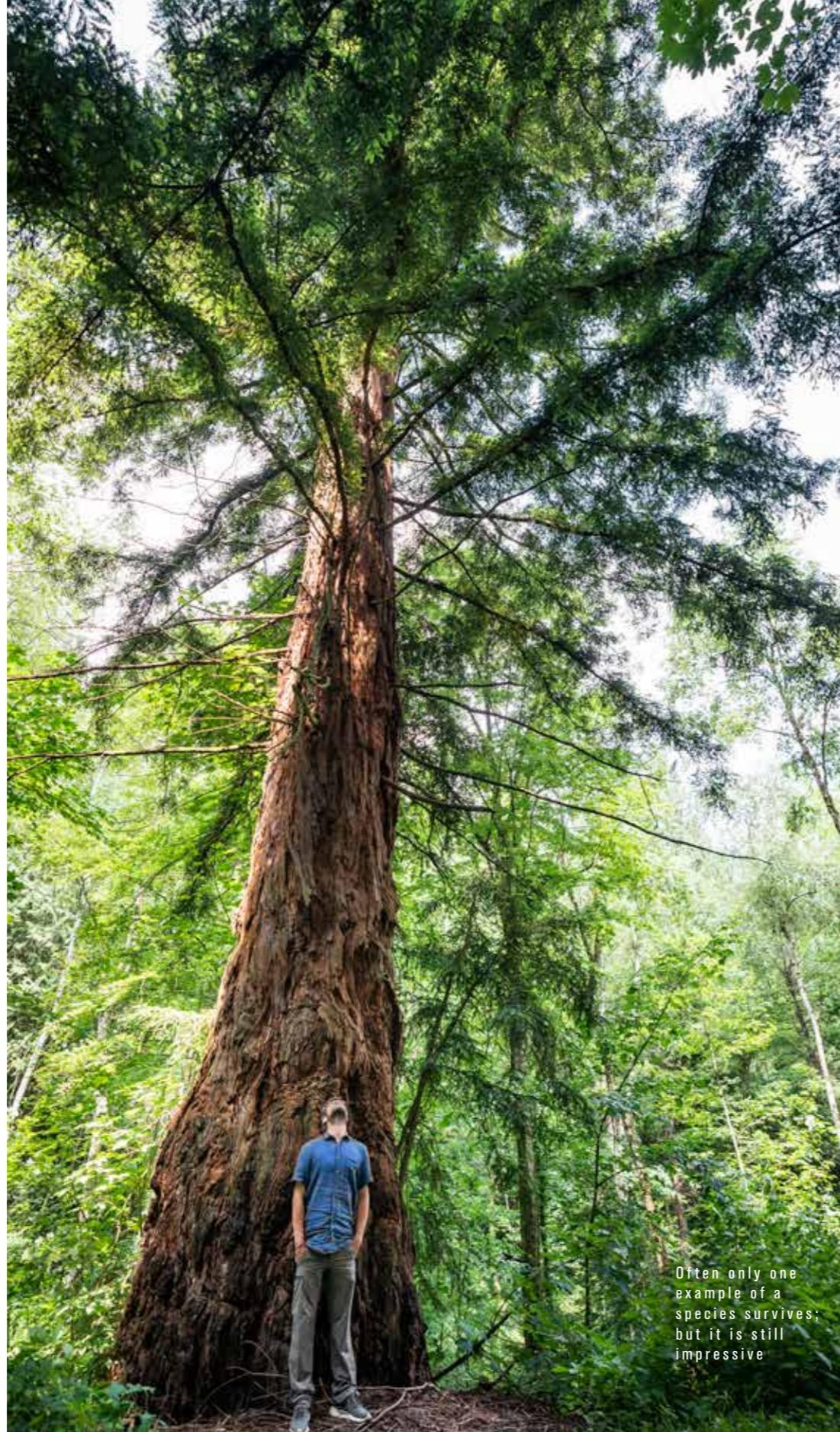
Giant sequoia cones are huge

exotic trees, even the tallest humans feel tiny. Some sequoias stand alone like guards; others are grouped together like a battalion.

In 1872, Christian Freiherr von Berckheim was the owner of Weinheim Castle, the palace that is now the city hall. In those days, it was

How did giant sequoias get to Germany?

The first German sequoias were grown from the fabled "Wilhelma seeds". In 1864, King William I of Württemberg ordered a few thousand seeds from America and had them cultivated in Stuttgart's Wilhelma botanical gardens. From there, the saplings were distributed to forests and royal parks throughout his kingdom.



Often only one example of a species survives; but it is still impressive



Exotic trees also grow in the Weinheim Palace Gardens

“
Even at 150, sequoias will live for another 150 years”

Dietmar Spicker, local guide

fashionable for the aristocracy to plant a few exotic trees in their gardens. Berckheim went one step further: he wanted not just a wood, but a veritable forest. Time and again, he expanded it. Today, there are more than 150 tree and shrub species from around the Mediterranean and Africa, from America and Asia, all growing on about 150 acres/60 hectares. The trees were often planted in clumps, sometimes as many as 50 sequoias together. These giants are undoubtedly the most impressive trees, as well as the oldest, but as local guide Dietmar Spicker points out: "In fact, they are still only half-grown; they have only reached half their height. It will take another 150 years until they are fully grown!"

He leads visitors through the Exotic Forest, the Exotenwald Weinheim. "High up, about 300 ft/100 m from the ground, these trees are a bit like people," he says with a chuckle. "They start off tall and skinny, and then put on weight in old age." The giant sequoias are the main magnet for visitors to Weinheim, but there are also equally rare and important exotic trees, such as unusual pine and cedar species, ginkgo and magnolia. Since 1955, Exotenwald has been owned by the state, but Berckheim's dream is still being pursued, with 400 new tree species planted so far. The 19th-century aristocrat spent a fortune; no wonder he liked to ride around in a horse-drawn carriage to admire his extraordinary collection. Today, everyone can enjoy his vision. The forest is free to enter and, with wide paths, offers barrier-free access to all. ■

More information

Entry is free to the Palace Gardens and the Exotic Forest, with its marked hiking trails. For detailed information, visit www.weinheim.de

When the meadow orchards bloom

In spring, nowhere is more beautiful than Swabia's Streuobstwiese, wild "meadow orchards", when the fruit trees blossom. In the 19th century, rural communities shared orchards; their animals grazed under the fruit trees and they harvested the apples, pears and Zwetschgen (like tiny plums). Today, with 1.5 million trees, the countryside between the Swabian Alb and the River Neckar has changed little. This is one of Europe's largest remaining untamed ecological treasures and it is studded with gnarled trees bearing ancient varieties of fruit. The best way to see this landscape? Follow the hiking and nature trails that criss-cross the region.

Spring, when the trees are in bloom, is a great time to visit – but so is autumn. Unusual herbs and berries, as well as apples, pears and

plums, are harvested by hand. Older trees produce rather tart, tannin-rich fruit, perfect for pressing in traditional ways. One example is Jörg Geiger's company in Schlat, near Göppingen. He makes sparkling fruit wines, as well as alcohol-free drinks, using old varieties of apples and pears. Additional flavours come from herbs and berries, such as juniper and elderflower, from these unique "meadow orchards". ■

Special tip

THE REAL TASTE OF FRUIT

Book tasting tours to see how Jörg Geiger makes fruit wines at www.manufaktur-joerg-geiger.de

For more on hiking and biking in "meadow orchard country", visit www.schwaebischealb.de/



These are Zwetschgen, rather like damsons. The intense flavour of these plums is perfect for fruit brandies and jams



Spring fever: Bratbirne, an unusual pear variety, in full bloom

NATURALLY DELICIOUS

Gin made with fresh spruce tips? Soft drinks made from dandelion leaves? Here are some tasty treats with wild and natural flavours, all made in SouthWest Germany

NEEDLE GIN
Spruce up your drink



Today's craft gins come in a wide variety of flavours – and aromas. For example, fresh shoots of the common spruce add a unique Black Forest twist to Needle Black Forest Dry Gin. Produced by the Bimmerle spirit distillery in Achern-Mösbach, south of Baden-Baden. It costs 20 EUR a bottle. www.needle-gin.com/en



TANNENLIEBE Tart and lemony

The Black Forest is known for distilling (see Needle Gin), but in Lenzkirch, southeast of Freiburg, the Rogg family brewery has created Tannenliebe, a non-alcoholic soft drink made from handpicked silver fir tree tips. www.blackforest-tourism.com/Media/Attraktionen/Rogg-Brewery

3 4

ROYAL GAME Organic from the forest

Meat doesn't get more organic than game from the forest. On their private estates, the aristocratic Hohenzollern family uses professional hunters to cull wild boar, roe deer and fallow deer. Buy game at the shop on the Wildpark Josefslust estate, Sigmaringen, south of Stuttgart, or order online at www.forst.hohenzollern.com

RITA GOLLER'S SNAIL FARM Slow food

Rita Goller has been breeding edible snails for 16 years and some 30,000 live in her garden in Münsingen, west of Ulm. After spending four years in luscious greenery, they land on the plates of regional gourmet restaurants. The snails are also sold in tins as a snail sausage (6.50 EUR for 200 g).



Southeast of Baden-Baden, the Black Forest village of Enzklösterle is surrounded by pine forests – offering ideal conditions for growing blueberries. And locals know the best ways to prepare these delicious wild berries. No wonder Enzklösterle has been nicknamed Heidelbeerdorf, Blueberry Village. www.enzklösterle.de/en/



STUGGI SCHORLE Anyone for dandelion?

Christoph Schützinger's Stuggi Schorle sparkling fruit drinks offer a taste of SouthWest Germany. Apple or blackcurrant? Rhubarb or quince? There is even dandelion – using juice from the roots and leaves!



CAMPFIRE COOKING Cook on an open fire

Cooking on an open fire takes skill. Katja Suntoyo and Robert Falkenberg have outdoor cookery classes for groups at the Faunus Wilderness School, with lots of tips for your next outdoor holiday. Located in Weingarten, northwest of Stuttgart.



More information
For food, drink and cookery tips, visit www.tourism-bw.com/things-to-do/wine-dine

1 HEILBRONN The clean green River Neckar

The River Neckar provides a green oasis in the heart of the fine old town of Heilbronn. People from all walks of life enjoy spending time here. Getting out on the water is easy: rent a motorboat, work your muscles on a pedalo or just drift around on an inflatable boat with its own barbecue and sound system on board. But you can also just relax with a coffee on a sandy beach. The beer garden, with its riverside sunbathing area, is delightful. Sink into a deck chair and take in the views over the Neckar, surrounded by weeping willows and plane trees.



Special tip

URBAN PADDLES

Take a guided canoe trip on the river to get a different view of the city.

www.welcome.heilbronn.de

Go wild in the city

Look a lynx in the eye in a safari park,
relax in an old quarry, or hike through tall cacti.
In the following cities, you are never far
from green urban oases.



2 MANNHEIM

The Bird Island

✂️ & 📷 TERESA RICHTER

If you are lucky enough to work in tourism (as I do, at the State Tourist Board South-West Germany), you can explore the places, sights and landscapes that you are promoting. Time and again, I am fascinated by the sheer variety on offer in SouthWest Germany. On a recent visit to Mannheim, the third largest city in the state, I discovered a very special place: the Reissinsel, Reiss Island. This is a nature reserve, named after Carl Reiss. A century ago, the industrialist bought land on a bend in the Rhine to extract clay for brick-

making. But the island's beauty persuaded him to leave it to the city as a protected area.

One of Germany's unique locations

Today, everyone is grateful to him. His initiative created a unique retreat, right in the middle of the city – it is free! The surrounding landscape may be industrial, but locals can escape from the urban hustle and bustle and enjoy a true wilderness, with a diverse community of animals and plants, including some 50 species of birds that breed on the island, including kingfishers, owls and geese. But humans can only visit between July and February. For four months in spring, from March until the end of June, the island is closed to the public to protect birds

Some 50 species breed on the island, including kingfishers, owls and geese

URBAN WILDERNESS



On the Bellenkrappen, an arm of the Rhine, Cuckoo Island provides yet another green escape

during the breeding season. This interlude also allows the vegetation to regenerate. As there are no embankments here, the Rhine regularly breaches its banks, helping to foster a species-rich alluvial forest. This really is one of Germany's unique locations.

Here I am, surrounded by Mother Nature

Untouched by man for decades, the Reissinsel's 250 acres/100 hectares are one of Germany's last natural floodplain meadows, providing an important retreat for people, as well as wildlife. From the car park, it is only a few minutes' walk to reach the entrance to the reserve. Here, I am greeted by a cheeky squirrel, who is romping among the trees, probably looking for a nut. But he scampers off before I can take his photo. Never mind! No doubt I will see more animals! I follow the path, a circular trail, whose 3 miles/4.3 km take in a lush green meadow with gnarled old fruit trees. Apparently, these are part of the largest wild orchards on the Upper Rhine plain. There are even wild grapes growing here, the ancestors of the modern wine grape!

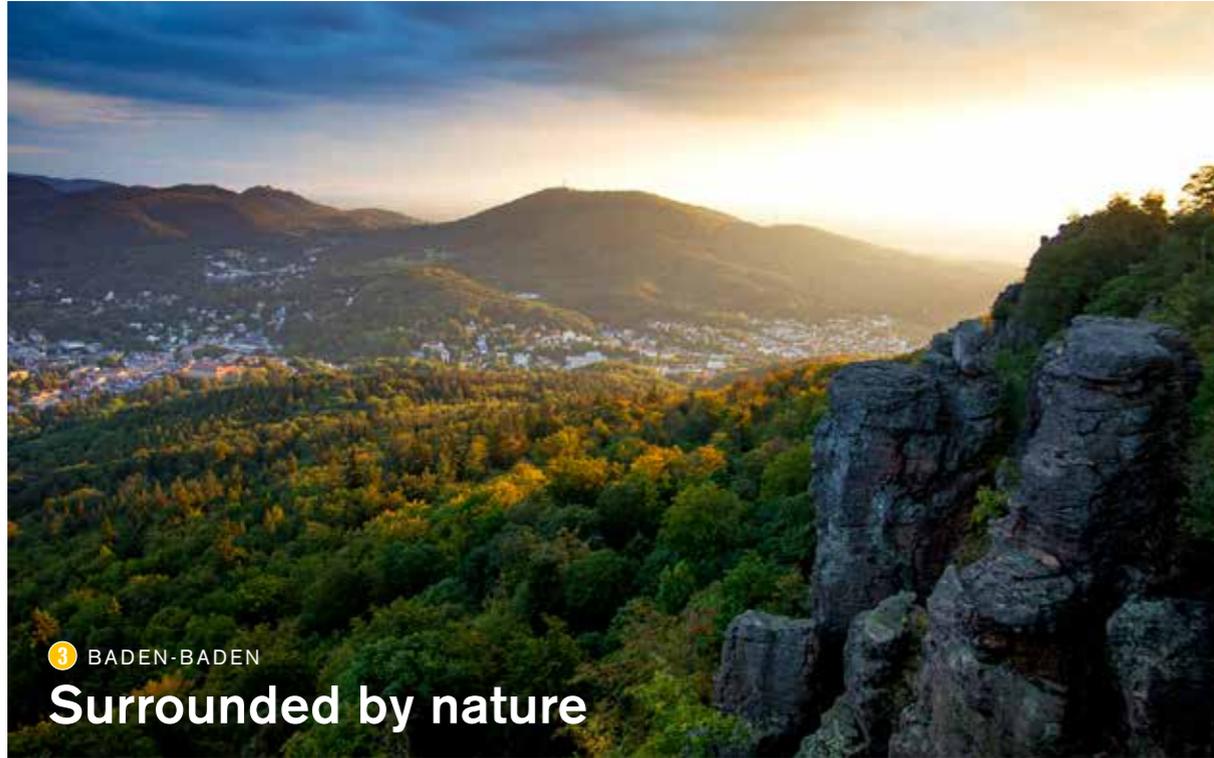
Leaving the sprawling meadow behind, I soon realise that this place really is extraordinary. Turning onto the unpaved road that leads through the forest, I find trees overturned by a

storm that have been left lying across the path. Now and then, I catch a glimpse of the Rhine through the bushes. Big barges chug past, their wakes washing against the gravel banks. From a distance, I hear the sound of cranes at work in the industrial area. But here I am in the peace and quiet, at one with Mother Nature.

Crossing a bridge, I reach the northern part of the island: a protected area of forest. Here, the wilderness is left to its own devices. There is no human intervention. Woodpeckers tap away at huge old trees, while geese and ducks take an afternoon nap on a small tributary of the Rhine. Mice rustle in the undergrowth; a small frog jumps across the path. After only a short time here, it is easy to understand why Carl Reiss insisted in his will that the island should be left exactly as it was. As I leave the forest and circle back to the start of my walk, I feel relaxed and refreshed. And I'm thrilled to have discovered so much that is wild – right in the middle of busy Mannheim. ■

More information

Detailed information about the island and other green spaces is available at www.visit-mannheim.de/en



3 BADEN-BADEN

Surrounded by nature

The ruins of Hohenbaden Castle stand on a rocky cliff high above this sophisticated spa town. To see them, hike up through the forest. It takes about an hour and the trail can be steep, but you will be rewarded with a terrific panorama of Baden-Baden, the Black Forest and the Rhine plain. [visit.baden-baden.de/en](http://www.visit.baden-baden.de/en)



4 KARLSRUHE

The Botanical Gardens

Tropical flowers; rare citrus, cinnamon and coffee plants; succulents, such as cacti – this is a collection worth seeing. And the elegance of the 19th-century architecture adds to the experience. www.karlsruhe-erleben.de/en

5 ULM

Stand-up paddleboarding



Get out onto the water. Leave everyday life behind you. See the green side of Ulm on a stand-up paddleboard on the Danube. The bonus? Great views of the cities of Ulm and Neu-Ulm (opposite), plus the world's tallest church spire, the old city walls and the Metzgerturn, the so-called "leaning tower of Ulm". www.tourismus.ulm.de

URBAN WILDERNESS

6 STUTTGART

Travertine Park



Stone-cutting equipment and railway tracks recall the old days, when travertine was quarried here. Now children enjoy the playground, lizards scamper in the sun, and the views over the River Neckar to Bad Cannstatt are glorious. A great example of recycling the past! www.stuttgart.de/en

7 HEIDELBERG

Wolfsbrunnen Park



According to legend, a wolf ate a fortune-teller here at Elector Frederick II's former hunting lodge. That was centuries ago; today, this leafy retreat, east of the city centre, is admired for its greenery, pretty lake and gourmet restaurant. www.heidelberg-marketing.de/en



More information

To find out more about South-West Germany's green urban spaces, visit www.tourismus-bw.com/destinations/cities



8 FREIBURG

Gardening in the city

Freiburg is one of Europe's most environmentally conscious cities, with a host of urban gardens. In small plots, such as the Waldgarten Wiehre and the WandelGarten Vauban (photo), locals work together to grow and harvest vegetables. [visit.freiburg.de/en](http://www.visit.freiburg.de/en)

9 PFORZHEIM

Talk to the animals



Pforzheim's wildlife park, south of the city, is fun for families. Deer and mountain sheep, yaks, lynx and otters are among some 400 animals, some of which can be petted and even fed. Older children love the aerial views of the wild animals on the eight high-ropes courses. www.pforzheim.de/en

Rejuvenate in the Black Forest Highlands

Relax, revitalise and indulge yourself in the breathtaking natural landscape of the Black Forest Highlands. The region is ideally located, not far from France and Switzerland and close to the beautiful City of Freiburg.

Walkers and hikers can take advantage of the clean and refreshing mountain air in this high altitude region. Connoisseurs can enjoy sampling the award-winning local cuisine or recuperate in one of the thermal spas. Take a time-out for yourself in the Black Forest Highlands.

Service & contact

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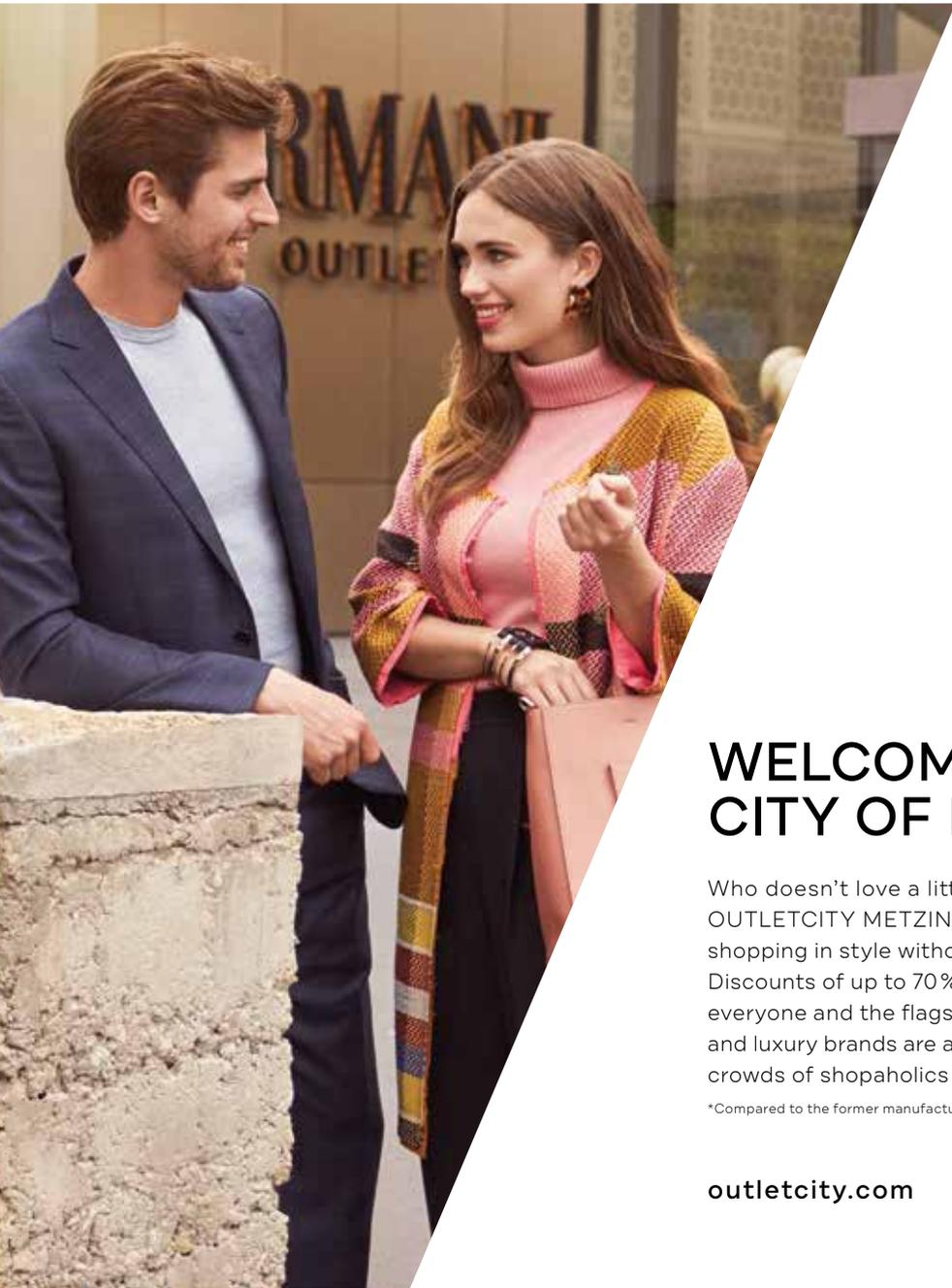
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