

Franconian Jura -- Golden Route Through A Golden Land



[Franconian Jura Map](#)

On the plains east of the ancient city of [Nuremberg](#), between the Rivers [Danube](#) and [Main](#), you'll find the Franconian Jura (German: *Fränkische Alb*), also known as Franconian Alb. This range of hills, ranging between 300 and 650m in height (1000 – 2100 feet), is ideal for less experienced climbers (like me!).

Springtime in the Franconian Jura is a glorious panorama of color, as the fruit orchards burst into bloom. That glory reappears in the fall, when the hillsides blaze with autumn colors.

The *Fränkische Alb* has three distinct districts, Hersbruck Switzerland, Altdorfer Land, and Schnaittach-Lower Pegnitz. Their names hardly do justice to their unique terrain. In the Franconian Jura, majestic stone towers loom above the woodlands like the ruined frameworks of giants' tombs, and from the hilltops panoramic views stretch in all directions.

Enjoy warm weather pastimes like swimming in the area's lakes or thermal outdoor pools. Pegnitz River trout and pike and Happburger Reservoir carp await their would-be conquerors. Stop in [Hersbruck](#) to enjoy the *Thermenland*, a spa complex where the indoor and outdoor pools are equipped with massage nozzles and bubble couches.

Posted hiking and cycling trails abound throughout the Franconian Jura. The most notable of them follows the Golden Route, which once served as a lucrative commercial highway connecting the area's towns, allowing safe passage for the merchants who traveled between them.

The wealth of the towns along the Golden Route is evident from their prosperous market places and castles. The 14th-century island castle at [Lauf an der Pegnitz](#) has an imperial hall in which, at

the order of the Emperor, the coats-of-arms of more than a hundred of the region's noble families were carved into the sandstone walls.

Even in the normally sunny *Fränkische Alb*, however, gloomy days do occur. They won't dampen your vacation, thanks to the region's rich museum heritage. Some of them are one-of-a-kind. In Hersbruck, for example, is the world's only museum dedicated to sheep herding, devoted to the historical tradition of herding sheep in the town's surrounding meadows.

Don't be misled if you hear it referred to as the "German Shepherds" Museum, because Rin Tin Tin will be nowhere in sight! ;-)

Follow your visit with another area tradition, enjoying the efforts of the local innkeepers to serve "homeland on the table" cuisine. They even have classes for future innkeepers in the art of preparing fresh potato dumplings!

[Feucht](#)'s two museums could not be more different from each other. The Zeidel Museum is devoted to the history of honey making. Honey from Feucht has long been used in Nuremberg's unsurpassed *Lebkuchen* (gingerbread). The Hermann Oberth Space Museum focuses on one of the fathers of modern rocketry and astronautics.

Finally, no vacation in the Franconian Jura would be complete without a visit to [Kelheim](#), where the Danube's channel has been carved over the eons from the limestone bedrock of the hills. Towering on the riverside cliffs above the town are the colossal figures decorating the Hall of Freedom.

Just a short hike away at the Danube Gorge is the Weltenburg Abbey, where beer has been brewed since 1050 A.D. All that practice paid off handsomely in 2004, when the monastery's *Weltenburger Kloster Barock Dunkel* won the World Beer Cup in its class!