

Hohenzollern Route -- Royal Scenic Route With Captivating Castles

You know you're "important" when a country designates an entire [scenic route](#) to your family name. The name Hohenzollern can trace its roots all the way back to the 11th century (although it was just known as Zollern back then) all the way up to present day.

The House of Hohenzollern no longer rules the area once known as [Prussia](#), as well as Germany and Romania as of the end of [World War II](#). Yet, the family never "officially" given up their rightful claim to region. But, no "prince" today is recognized as rightful heir to the area. (I say prince because the Hohenzollern Line only follows the male lineage).

Start of the Hohenzollern Route

The Hohenzollern Route, or *Hohenzollernstraße* in German, follows the region that these princes once ruled. But, if you're going to be a prince, you might as well be one in what could possibly be the most beautiful region of Germany... the [Swabian Alb](#) in [Baden-Württemberg](#).

Now, don't worry about getting lost. The Hohenzollern Route is a 300km circular route. But, technically the route starts in the village of Glatt (part of [Sulz am Neckar](#)). While you might think that Glatt is just some small sleepy village, it can boast that it has one of the oldest Renaissance castles in [South Germany](#).

Hey, can you think of a better way to start a Royal Family scenic route than with a castle? Yeah, me either!

Your next town is [Haigerloch](#) which sits atop an Atomic Cellar. In addition, it has many framework houses, an 18th century Pilgrimage Church, and a Roman Tower. Haigerloch's former synagogue (which was open from 1783 to 1938) is now a Jewish Museum.

Oh, you're going to love the next town on the *Hohenzollernstraße*! [Hechingen](#) is not only the hometown of Elsa Einstein (wife of Albert Einstein) and Markus Wolf (the world's best spy!), it's where you'll come to see Burg Hohenzollern!

[Hohenzollern Castle](#) is an architectural masterpiece originally built around 1000 A.D. with improvements made throughout the centuries. It has both Protestant and Catholic chapels (because the Hohenzollern Line split between the two religions); and proudly displays the crown of Wilhelm II.

The Hohenzollern castle is really spectacular, receiving over 300,000 visitors a year. I'm sure the Christmas Market, theater performances, and concerts have something to do with it, too.

Now Hechingen has a lot more going on than just the Burg. Really, I wouldn't lie. Perhaps you'd like to visit the Roman Outdoor Museum or the restored 18th century synagogue? Did I mention that Crown Prince Wilhelm and his wife Cecile are buried in Hechingen's cemetery? No? Well, you should go nonetheless — this is the mighty Hohenzollern Route after all!

[Albstadt](#) is quite the outdoorsy town. Other than a visit to the Textile Museum, you'll mostly be outside in a hot air balloon or taking a guided hiking tour. Sounds good, yes? BTW, the Hohenzollern Route leads you through its Onstmettingen neighborhood.

If you like Albstadt, you'll love [Trochtelfingen](#). It has a quaint local history museum and the frescoes found in St. Erhard's Church are just brilliant. Beer lovers will truly appreciate the Brewery Museum, shoppers the *Martinmarkt* (2nd Monday in November) & Christmas Market (2nd Advent weekend), and historians Castle Trochtelfingen. This is a town that can make the most discriminating traveler happy.

Another town ending in -ingen is [Gammertingen](#). Set right around the Nature Reserve Fehltal, outdoorsy types will be more than happy just walking or cycling around. Although you might want to come into town to take in a concert at the Town Hall that was once Castle Spethsches. I would suggest not missing the ruins of Burg Baldenstein, an 11th century castle that was destroyed in 1150 and never rebuilt. Ohhh, don't you just love those kinds of places?

Your next town on the Hohenzollern Route is Hettingen, where views from the watertower look over the verdent countryside. Look closely, you'll see the 11th century Castle Hettingen (home to the Carnival Museum), the Sebastian Chapel with its 17th century frescoes, and the St. Martin Church — originally built 499 (no, that's not a misprint!).

Now you history lovin' folks are gonna fall in love with Veringenstadt! Go ahead, ask me why. OK, I'll tell you. Veringenstadt has the oldest *Rathaus* in Hohenzollern (built 1415) that's now a local history museum. Look for the "witch's shirt," a rare piece of apparel that was used to "brand" accused witches. Pretty neat, no?

It also has castle ruins (Castle Veringen, 12th century), beautiful frescoes in the castle chapel; and more than 30 caves to explore. With places like this, it's no wonder that the Hohenzollern's don't want to give up claim! I wouldn't either.

It'll be hard to leave Veringenstadt, but when you get a gander at [Sigmaringen](#) you'll be REALLY glad you did. Located along the Upper Danube Nature Park, Sigmaringen has plenty of medieval buildings in its Old Town. The best way to understand and see it all is by taking a guided tour. Trust me, you'll be glad you did — then go back and take your time to see the Prince Art Museum and Schloss Sigmaringen.

The Hohenzollern Route now meets up with the [Upper Swabian Baroque Route](#) & the Swabian

Poet Route in the town of [Ostrach](#). Museum-goers will love this place! There's not only a local history museum but, a Folklore Museum, a Landmark Museum, and a Fashion Museum too. Then again, this is a "noble" family route — so don't miss the 11th century ruins of Burg Burgweiler.

There are more German scenic routes that cross [Pfullendorf](#), the next town along the Hohenzollern Route. Besides the Upper Swabian Baroque Route, Pfullendorf is on the [German Framework Road](#) and the [Way of St. James](#) (a pilgrimage route). Plus, it is really close to [Lake Constance](#)!

Don't know what to see first? Yeah, it'll be hard to choose, so good thing I'm here to help!

Wald (Hohenzollern), the next town, also has its own monastery. Kloster Wald was built in 1212 and almost destroyed in the [Thirty Years' War](#) (1618-1648). It was quickly rebuilt so many of the monastery's buildings are only from the 17th century. Its hiking trails winding around from the monastery are a modern touch.

Between the [Danube](#) and Lake Constance is [Meßkirch](#). Walking through here is like taking a time machine from present day (with its Classic Car Museum) back through the centuries (its early 15th century castle), to its Diana Temple (the largest Roman estate in [Baden](#)). Yes, that's like 2000 years of history neatly packed within 76 square kilometers! :-)

Oh, the food is quite excellent in Meßkirch, too. At *Fastnacht* (right before Lent starts in Feb/Mar) everyone enjoys the *Katzenreck Bisquitboden* made with butter, cream, chocolate, nuts, and rum. Yeah, my thoughts exactly — YUM!

Now that we've gotten a delicious nosh, it's back to castles! Leibertingen, a town of barely 2,500 people, has the fortress looking Castle Wildstein and Castle Leibertingen. It also has four churches and many forest trails where if you look you'll see an eagle or owl. Pretty awesome for a town that's just a little blip on the map!

If you think Leibertingen is small, wait til you get a load of Beuron! Sleepy lil' Beuron has only 713 residents — yet, over a 100,000 people a year come to see the Benedictine Abbey Beuron alone! While you're at it, you might as well see the ruins of Castle Falkenstein and the Chape St. Maurus. Sorry, Schloss Werenwag is private property.

All right, with all this noble and royal history it's about time you just had some simple fun! Come to Schwenningen's Straw Park where every year in the late summer you can see all sorts of creations created from straw! What, tell me you didn't see that coming? ;-)

Sadly, we're almost at the end of the Hohenzollern Route, only three more towns left. I hope you've enjoyed the trip so far — I know I have!

After leaving Schwenningen (Heuberg) you'll arrive in [Meßstetten](#), where you're at one of the

highest points on the Swabian Alb. The nearby caves are what draws thousands of visitors to the area. OK, being close to the Limes-Straße doesn't hurt, either.

Known as "Little Venice" around these parts is [Balingen](#), because of all the tiny intersecting waterways. It's also known for its winter sports like ice skating, ice hockey, skiing, snowboarding, and bobsledding. Did I miss any? No, good! I would suggest waiting for warmer weather to play golf.

This is it, Owingen, neighborhood of Haigerloch, the last village on the Hohenzollern Route before you arrive back in Haigerloch proper. If you're going to see anything at all in Owingen it should be the Weilerkirche which is the oldest Roman church of the entire route. Go ahead, imagine yourself a Hohenzollern and pray for your land from here. It'll be our secret! ;-)

I'm sorry to see our time together on the Hohenzollern Route is coming to an end.

Remember, this entire route can be taken by car, bicycle, and/or your own two feet. So, maybe you can do the whole thing three different ways, and maybe run into a real-life Hohenzollern along the way. ;-)

Hohenzollern Route Web Site

Here's the official Web site of the [Hohenzollern Route](#).