

Idar-Oberstein Is A Famous Gem And Jewelry Town

Idar-Oberstein is immediately distinguishable from other towns in [Rhineland-Palatinate](#) thanks to its impressive 15th-century Felsenkirche, or Church of the Rock. You will see the white-walled church watching over the houses below from its prominent niche in the hills that overlook the town. It was built by baron Wyrich IV in 1482-84, allegedly in remorse for killing the brother of a knight.

Inside the church you will discover an extraordinary altarpiece, a natural trickling fountain, the famous agate cross, and an original silent organ. Take note of the Gothic baptismal front and the Renaissance paintings of apostles by Stephan Graf. This is a unique and exquisite sanctuary.

— Top Areas Of Interest

- [History](#)
- [Webcams](#)

- [Gunzenhausen](#)
- [Sigmaringen](#)

Neighboring the church are the ruins of two medieval castles that you will surely want to see. Although not much remains of the Bosselstein, erected in 1197, the Schloss Oberstein, with its double defense parapets, has been largely restored to the glory of its beginnings in 1320.

Down in the marketplace, at the foot of the church, you will encounter the Town Museum with its tributes to the history of gemstones and local craftsmen, engravers, gem cutters, silversmiths and goldsmiths.

The German Gemstone Museum nearby is also worth a visit for its extensive collection of artfully crafted sculptures, engraved treasures, and some 10,000 raw and polished gemstones — the most comprehensive collection of its kind.

The area surrounding Idar-Oberstein was once famous for its agate and jasper deposits. You can still tour a functional gem mine, the *Steinkaulenberg*, daily in March-November. An hour-long guided tour, the only one of its kind in Europe, will give you a special appreciation of agates,

amethysts, jasper, and smoke quartzes in their original environment, volcanic basalt.

Nowadays, of course, the local gem market is dominated by imported stones from Brazil and Africa. Shop around and you are sure to uncover some wonderful deals and the perfect souvenir from your visit to gemstone country.