

The Idyllic Route, In Essence, Is Quite Idyllic

Scoff if you must, but the Idyllic Route (called the *Idyllische Straße* in German and on plates) is a circular route that's aptly named because this 130km route follows along picturesque river valleys, woodlands, and swimming lakes, through the [Swabian-Franconian Forest](#) Nature Reserve in northern [Baden-Württemberg](#), northeast of [Stuttgart](#).

In essence, the natural landscape of the Idyllic Route is, um, quite idyllic. And it's best enjoyed by either hiking or biking it.

Come to think of it, it's the *only* way to do it. ;-)

Oh, and the fact that this was once at the edge of the Roman Empire only enhances this route.

Start of the Idyllic Route

Although the Idyllic Route's "focus" is on the lovely landscape, valleys and trails, we can't leave out the adjoined towns and villages, can we? So...

It all starts in [Welzheim](#), once a Roman stronghold. There's an outdoor Archaeology Museum that highlights these former residents and their castellets. The Senses Experiences is a nifty experience designed to engage everyone of your senses.

If you like roller coasters (or a summer Toboggan track) you'll love Kaisersbach, the next stop. You'll also love it if you like charming farms, which are nestled nicely within the Welzheimer Forest.

Look, our first castle along the Idyllic Route! You'll find Burg Reichenberg (built 1230) is a fortress found in the town of Althütte. Don't look for a moat though, it's long gone — and you'll need to call ahead if you want to see the inside.

It's worth it, though; this castle just screams of the medieval. ;-)

Next up is [Murrhardt](#), or as it was once known in Roman times as Vicus Murrensis. In honor of the Romans there's a Roman Museum; plus, it lies along the *Limeswanderweg*. And if you think the days of the Romans (or just the 9th century monastery) was a long time ago, I can only imagine what you'd think about the dinosaur fossils that were excavated here.

Hey, maybe you'll get lucky and find more while you're camping at the Forest Lake? :-)

The valleys of & around the town of [Sulzbach an der Murr](#) sure makes for a great photo — almost enough to make you forget about its odd-looking 3-storey castle (built with stone & framework

construction), its 13th century military church, and Barefoot Path.

Go ahead, kick your shoes off for a while — this is a walking route, remember? ;-)

The twelve villages of Spiegelberg is a nice place to take it slow to wander around its former mine and Glass Museum.

Another museum of glass awaits you in Wüstenrot, as does the idyllic (c'mon, you had to know I'd be throwing that word around once in a while) Finsterroter See. Wüstenrot is found along the old Roman Limes (boundary), and it has a half-timbered/half-stone 13th century castle (Castle Marienfels).

OK, so it must be Monday when you arrive in [Mainhardt](#) then? Whatever day of the week it is, Mainhardt is quite a town — and where you'll see a reconstructed Roman Watchtower, a Roman Museum, get to swim in a mineral pool, or enjoy a performance at the outdoor theater by an amateur playgroup — all in the Mainhardt Forest.

Oberrot's got the right idea of the great outdoors with golfing, tennis, cross-country skiing, hiking, biking, and a swimming lake. It should, 'cause it lies within the Schwäbisch-Fränkischer Wald Nature Park. It's also got a thousand year old church (St. Boniface) and a small mountainside chapel.

It's too bad that the Burg Rötenburg isn't in as nice condition as the previous castle (only its 21-meter high donjon remains) — but the 24 villages of Fichtenberg are quaint enough to make up for it.

You better plan for your arrival in [Gaildorf](#) on a Sunday, as this is the only day the *Kernerturm* (an observation tower) is open. Trust me, the view of the Swabian Alb from here is worth planning accordingly. Plus, there's a local history museum in the 15th century *Altes Schloss* (Old Castle), which is also a concert venue.

It's another "Sulzbach" that's on the Idyllic Route, this time the town of Sulzbach-Laufen — whose landmark is the 15th century Heerenberg Church. I would think it would be the *Altenbergturm* (a stunning observation tower that's open year-round) that's got the best views of the Alb because it's one of the highest in the region.

For something closer to the ground, visit the Renaissance Castle Chapel at the medieval Castle Schmiedelfeld. Nearby Castle Wolkenstein was built around the same time, but nothing other than its original hill remains.

I can't believe it, we've come to the last town on the Idyllic Route: [Gschwend](#). And what a nice place to end it, especially since there's a 10-station Art & Meditation Path and two natural rock

areas known as the Devil's Kitchen and Devil's Pulpit.

In the same vicinity there's a stone atonement cross, put here by a family sometime back in the 15th or 16th century to make amends for a murder. At least that's what the legend says.

The view from Gschwend's *Hagbergturm* is a pretty awesome place to totally reflect on all the amazing things you just saw along the way. I bet you'll use the word idyllic more times than not on properly describing the Idyllic Route. ;-)