

## Schöntal -- Better Than Something Ten Times Its Size

Wow, I've been to cities with 56,000 people that don't have half the stuff that Schöntal has with only a tenth of the population. Who knew what cool stuff there was up here in northern [Baden-Württemberg](#)? Once again, I'm pleasantly shocked. ;-)

The first thing you might notice in Schöntal is the Schöntal Abbey, or as it's called around here, Kloster Schöntal. Anyway, at one time it was a Cistercian monastery that was sold to pay off the Maulbronn Monastery's debt.

It's been around from the middle of the 12th century, and has seen much of the town's history. It was abandoned at one time (during the [Peasants' War](#)), and was under siege by troops a hundred years later during the [Thirty Years' War](#). It was once an Imperial Abbey, but today it's a retreat center.

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

Hard as it is to tear yourself away from this gorgeous church, you've got some castles to see. Burg Aschhausen doesn't look as old as it is — it was built and destroyed during the Middle Ages, eventually rebuilt in the 1700s.

Burg Berlichingen, while technically a castle that once had a moat, looks more like a big manor house. You can't get inside though, someone owns it.

If you want to see the Götzenburg Castle Museum, you better do between April and October as that's the only time it's open. And just because nothing remains of the 14th century Westernhausen Castle, doesn't mean it isn't cool to see where it was at one time.

Medieval history is good, but Roman history is older. Schöntal used to lie along the Limes Hohenlohe, a border area from the first century A.D. Some think the border was used more for commerce and trade — but does it matter two thousand years later? Guess not, but it's still very cool to see.

Another one of Schöntal's historical sites is the *Jüdischer Friedhof*, or Jewish Cemetery. There was a Jewish community in Schöntal for many centuries, as the cemetery's oldest grave dates to 1659 — while the last one held was in 1936. There's a plaque at the cemetery that details the community's long history in the area.

For as much as Schöntal's got in the history department, it's got going on in the fun department. You've got the *Maibaumfest* on May Day (May 1), the Summer Festival and Street Festival (both in June), the Autumn Festival and Oktoberfest (both in October), a December Christmas Market, and a Wine & Autumn Festival in September.

What Schöntal really shows us, is that you don't have to be a major city to be spectacular. Yeah, you can keep the big cities — I'll take Schöntal any day of the week. :-)