

Schwanau -- Naughty Nobles In The Upper Rhine Valley

After a week in the southwest it's nice to find myself in [Baden-Württemberg](#) again; this time in the town of Schwanau, right at the French border along the [Rhine River](#).

This is one of those places that had me totally interested in one of its former inhabitants, just as much as the place itself today.

Do I start with the who or the what? Coin toss.... the who wins!

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Schwanau was once the home of the infamous (yes, infamous) Bärbel von Ottenheim. I say infamous because she was the mistress of the Jakob von Lichtenberg, a nobleman from the 15th century.

OK, shocking by medieval standards — but when she inherited Schloss Buchweiler, his family went a little... ahhh, bananas, accusing her of witchcraft.

That must've been some woman to inherit an entire castle... what do I gotta do to get me one? ;-)

Two things to remember, the castle she inherited, Château Bouxwiller, now lies in France, not Germany (as does Château de Lichtenberg where Jakob was born). And you can see a relief of Bärbel's likeness in the *Liebieghaus* in [Frankfurt](#).

Now on to the what.

Hmm, what to do. What to do. Oh, yes, the *Waldfest* is a good idea, held every year in the middle

of May, then there's the Summer Festival in early July, the Winter Market at the end of November, the *Bauernmarkt* (Farmer Markets) in mid-September, and the *Erntedankfest* (Harvest Festival) and *Hebstfest* (Autumn Festival) in October.

In addition to all the festivals and markets you might want to stop by a couple of Schwanau's churches. The Catholic church in the village of Ottenheim is a modern building, but the Evangelical churches in Allmannsweier (you'll find this onion-domed church at Kirchplatz 4), Wittenweier and Nonnenweier are much older.

I think the one in Nonnenweier is really picturesque — shaded by trees alongside half-timbered houses.

As if walking around to see Schwanau's churches isn't enough, there are lots of foot and cycling paths that will take you all around the [Upper Rhine Valley](#).

Ain't Schwanau great? Where else will you find charming churches, fantastic festivals, and a sordid tale of naughty nobles?