

Swabia (Schwaben) -- More Than Just Political And Religious



[Swabia Map](#)

I thought long and hard about what to tell you about Swabia. It is so much more than just a geographical location (with no distinct borders, BTW) that stretches over [Württemberg](#) and [Bavarian Swabia](#).

Swabia (German: *Schwaben*) is a unique culture, has its own “language,” and on top of it all, has been the “hometown” of some of Germany’s most brilliant minds. As if that’s not enough, the food is some of the best you’ll ever eat of [German cuisine](#).

Ping-ponging all over the area isn’t exactly easy — causing me try a different approach here. And what better way to tell you about a place than by the people who lived, worked, played, and “fought” for it.

But first...

Swabia’s History

My reliable Roman historian friend, Tacitus, wrote about Swabia two thousand years ago telling the tales of the [Germanic Tribe](#), the *Suevi*. The people Tacitus wrote about weren’t exactly the modern-day Swabians — but they were their ancestors.

One thing’s different today than when Tacitus was here. The *Bodensee* was called the Swabian Sea by the Romans back then.

During the Middle Ages, the Swabian leaders created the Swabian League on Valentine’s Day

1488. This wasn't a merchant alliance like the [Hanseatic League](#). Oh no, it was all about religion, and the power of the elite (who lived and lorded over towns like [Nördlingen](#), [Bad Wimpfen](#), [Heilbronn](#), and [Donauwörth](#)) helped squash the uprising of the [Peasants' War](#) in the 1520s.

Swabian Culture & Language

One of the "funniest" ads I'd ever seen about Swabia reads: "Wir können alles. Außer Hochdeutsch." This translates to, "We Can Do Anything, Except Speak Standard German." They do have their own dialect, ya know.

Elsa Einstein was born in glorious [Hechingen](#), and famously known for her very pronounced Swabian accent.

I don't care if they're speaking Martian (do they really speak that on the planet of Mars?), it doesn't change the fact that Swabians are known as a frugal, hard-working people.

Plenty of jokes about Swabians exist; but please don't think the "simplified-minded Swabian" portrayed by the Brothers Grimm story is what you'll find. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Famous Swabians

That brings me to the brilliant minds that've come out of Swabia. No one, and I mean no one could ever say that Albert Einstein was simple.

Einstein was born in [Ulm](#), just one of the many towns in and around the region. Charlemagne's dad is a born Swabian, if you didn't know.

Who else was lived in Swabia? Nobel Prize winning writer, Hermann Hesse lived in Gaienhofen with his wife & sons. Plus, he did an apprenticeship in [Esslingen](#) and [Tübingen](#), both of which are found in Swabia.

Claus von Stauffenberg was also born in Swabia. The town of [Jettingen](#), to be exact.

Von Stauffenberg wasn't the only [World War II](#) soldier to be born here. Known as the Black Devil, Erich Hartmann, the World War II Flying Ace (and the most decorated pilot anywhere, even above my pal the Red Baron) was born in [Weissach](#).

If you're visiting Hartmann's hometown, head over to the Train Museum.

Gottlieb Daimler was born in the Swabian town of [Schorndorf](#), located just 26km east of [Stuttgart](#) and bordering [Göppingen](#).

Daimler's town of Schorndorf boasts many vineyards, plenty of festivals, lots of half-timbered houses (including the one that Daimler was born in), a gorgeous church, and a castle. And for a bit of fun, it's home to a Comics Museum.

Swabian Alb

Not all of Swabia encompasses the massive [Swabian Alb](#), also called the Swabian Jura. Again, don't care too much what you call it. ;-)

It's the low mountain range countryside that steals the show around these parts with its limestone cliffs, 2500 caves, the Blue Spot (it's a deep blue water hole) in the town of [Blaubeuren](#), and the Urach Waterfall.

As you hike along the Alb take notice of all the local flora & fauna, which includes everything from owls, ravens, and falcons to all sorts of butterflies and grasshoppers.

Feel the ground rumble? It's all right, but just so you know... the Alb is subject to earthquakes. Didn't stop anyone from naming the region a Biosphere Reserve.

Don't forget to look up. The Swabian Alb is where you'll find the posh [Hohenzollern Castle](#), the seat of what was once [Hohenzollern Province](#) (which includes Swabian towns like [Sigmaringen](#), [Haigerloch](#), and [Trochtelfingen](#)).

The famous Hohenzollern family wasn't the only dynasty to shape the history and lives of many. The Hohenstaufens went on to have two [Holy Roman Empire](#) rulers from here, and the Habsburgs had their hand in the things as well.

Should I have added all these guys in the famous Swabian section? Too late now, I guess. ;-)

Time To Eat — Swabian Cuisine

All this sightseeing makes me hungry. Bring on the food!

Swabian cuisine is known for its hearty dishes and soups. Yes, you'll find some wursts to grill (or just eat cold), but they ain't gonna have the rib-sticking power like *Maultaschen*, which is like South German ravioli. I would also make sure to try the *Schupfnudeln*, a potato dumpling that looks a lot like a finger.

Puhleeze... don't let that keep you from eating it. Just about everything is covered in some sort of gravy or broth.

Trust me, you'll appreciate the warmth. Parts of Swabia tend to be a bit colder than some other

areas of Germany.

Scenic Routes in Swabia

The weather, however, doesn't stop anyone from enjoy the countless [scenic routes](#) that criss-cross the region. The [Swabian Spa Route](#) is my ultimate favorite (hello — any massage is a good massage). And for you architecture loving crowd, there's the enormous [Upper Swabian Baroque Route](#).

It wouldn't be right to leave out the [Hohenzollern Route](#), the Hohenstaufen Route, the [German Framework Road](#) (all those half-timbered houses are fantastic), the [German Toy Road](#), and the unforgettable [German Alpine Road](#) (starting at Lake Constance).

Do you understand how difficult it would be to try to sum Swabia up any differently? As its been said, Swabia isn't just about its geography — it's a "cultural, historic, and linguistic" region.

All I know is the eight million or so people who live in Swabia sure are lucky.

Now if I could just get one of them to make me something yummy to eat...