

Swabian Alb (Schwäbische Alb) -- A Lifetime of Vacation Possibilities



[Swabian Alb Map](#)

Would you like your next vacation trip to be a trip back in time? If so, there's no better place in the world to do it than in southern Germany's highland region of the Swabian Alb (German: *Schwäbische Alb*), a range of volcanic hills extending for 124 miles (200 km) from [Bavaria](#)'s crater city of [Nördlingen](#) to [Tuttlingen](#) in southern [Baden-Württemberg](#).

The Swabian Alb is a hiking, biking, and climbing Paradise, with a terrain to match the skill level of any one who attempts it. There are limestone formations, gently undulating ridges, and peaks of up to 100 m (3300 feet).

The remarkable geological diversity of the area includes natural springs noted for the healing powers of their waters, splendid waterfalls, and networks of impressive dripstone caves. Lakes, or maars, formed in craters left remain as reminders of the volcanic activity of eons ago. Fossil hunters will be in their element vacationing here!

Add to its geological wonders the jewel-like palaces and hauntingly lovely Roman-era and medieval towns, as well as the exceptional local wines and cuisine available throughout the Swabian Alb. You'll have to look long and hard for any vacation destination as appealing as this one!

If you happen to fall in love with this region after your first vacation here (and don't be surprised if you do), you won't be alone. You'll be joining the ranks of some very special people, including philosophers, musicians, and poets like Hegel, Liszt, Schiller, and Hölderlin, who were following an even older artistic tradition!

In four [Swabian](#) caves about 20km (12mi) south of the city of [Ulm](#) have been found the oldest known man-made sculptures. One of them is the earliest known musical instrument, a flute m of mammoth bone dating back to 35,000 B.C.! You can visit the caves by appointment between May and October.

Some of Germany's greatest castles are located in the Swabian Alb. Perhaps the most impressive is the [Hohenzollern Castle](#), perched on the heights above [Hechingen](#) and [Bisingen](#). One of the most celebrated castles in all of Europe, it is really the romantic re-creation of two earlier castles which had dated back to the 11th century. The only royalty who lived in the castle, however, was the last Crown Prince of Prussia, Prince Wilhelm, who stayed there briefly in 1945.

Today, the 140-room Castle is a stunning revelation of the power which once belonged to the Hohenzollern dynasty.

No town captures the essence of the Swabian Alb as completely as the town of [Bad Urach](#), which has clung to its prehistoric roots while becoming a favorite getaway for the [Stuttgart](#) residents, about 45 minutes to its northwest. In Bad Urach you can experience the marvelous healing powers of the local mineral baths. You'll really appreciate them if you've spent your day seeing the countryside from the back of a horse you rented at the Maisental riding facility! You can also try hang gliding or even a balloon ride!

Close by, clinging to a cliff overlooking the Echaz Valley is the medieval Lichtenstein Castle, constructed as a hunting lodge for the Count of Württemberg in the mid-19th century.

Perhaps the most dramatic way to experience the Swabian Alb, however, is on a [river cruise](#) through the [Danube](#) Gorge. Over millions of years, Germany's legendary river has cut away the chalky soil of the Swabian Alb, creating cliffs which rise more than 300 feet (100 m) above the surface of its water.

Begin your cruise at [Kelheim](#), where the Weltenburg Abbey has stood at the mouth of the gorge since 620 A.D. This is also a great place to indulge in some of *Klosterbier* from the Abbey. It's been brewed here for more than a thousand years!