

Upper Palatinate -- Dark Forests, Clear Glass, Ancient Towns



[Upper Palatinate Map](#)

In the midst of the deep and dark [Bavarian Forest](#), along the furthest northern reaches of the [Danube River](#), the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius first established a royal camp in 179 A.D.

The camp thrived, becoming a city which in 739 A.D. was made a bishopric. By the 13th century it was one of the key training centers in all of Europe, and its 12th-century Stone Bridge, at 1017 feet (310m) is an unparalleled feat of engineering.

It's the city of [Regensburg](#), and it will make a splendid jumping off point for your vacation in Germany's Upper Palatinate region (German: *Oberpfalz*).

Rivaling the Stone Bridge are the 345 foot (105m) spires of St. Peter's Cathedral, where if you're lucky, you'll time your vacation to hear a performance of the cathedral's *Domspatzen* boys' choir. Within walking distance of the cathedral are the remains of the Roman fort's northern gate and excavations of areas of the Roman camp.

There is a ducal palace constructed in 988 AD. Stop for refreshments during your tour at the *Wurstküche* by the Stone Bridge. Sample the regional specialty, wells fish from the Danube.

Regensburg, however, provides just a small glimpse of the Upper Palatinate's delights. Only 11 km or 7 miles east of Regensburg is the remarkable Bavarian Walhalla, commissioned by King Ludwig I in the 1830s. A replica of Greece's Parthenon, it was meant to commemorate the greatest figures of [German history](#).

In the Upper Palatinate north of the Danube, are the Bavarian Forest uplands which join

Czechoslovakia's Bohemian Forest, creating central Europe's largest uninterrupted stretch of woodlands. Connected by a network of hiking trails, the region is outstanding country for skiers.

Your vacation won't be complete unless you follow the [Glass Route](#). Extending 250 km or 155 miles from [Neustadt an der Waldnaab](#) to [Passau](#), it reveals the mysterious world of glassmaking. Fine glass has been produced in the Bavarian Forest from the 14th century, and the same families have practiced the art of glassblowing glass blowing for tens of generations.

17th century [Bavarian](#) glassmakers were responsible for introducing lead crystal to the world. The Glass Route encompasses enormous factories, small glassblowing shops, and museums.

Passau, with a population of around 50,000, could not have a more scenic location. With three rivers converging here — the Danube, the Ilz, and the Inn — the city is built on a very narrow finger of land with banks on both the Danube and the Inn. Spending time in Passau may almost fool you into thinking you're in Venice!

The city's St. Stephen's Cathedral, first established in the 8th century, was rebuilt as a baroque cathedral in the 17th. At noon each day between May and September, the public can listen to music issuing from the cathedral's 17,300-pipe organ, the largest church organ in the world!

Like many of [Germany's regions](#), the Upper Palatinate has its share of healing waters. The *Sibyllenbad* in Neualbenreuth, located in a region known as the *Stiftland*, is one of Germany's newest spas, set among a backdrop of gently rolling hills and picturesque ponds.

Finally, the Upper Palatinate is a festival-lover's Mecca. In alternate years, the town of [Nabburg](#) hosts a medieval festival complete with preachers selling indulgences, beggars hiding in doorways, and parades of musicians playing lutes, bagpipes and the hurdy-gurdy enlivening the celebration. Knights guard the Palace and jesters frolic in the Old Town.

Ghost hiking festivals, Castle festivals, and theater festivals are also regulars on the list of things to do in the Upper Palatinate!

In other words, it's "as clear as the glass" from the Bavarian Forest that a single vacation in the Upper Palatinate won't be enough! ;-)