

Upper Swabia -- Biking Routes, Breweries, Baroque Beauty

What can you expect from a vacation in Upper Swabia (German: *Oberschwaben*)? An almost-tropical island (Mainau) complete with a ducal palace, surrounded by the waters of a lake at the foot of the [German Alps](#).

Another island (Reichenau) on the same lake attributed with being the birthplace of western civilization thanks to the Benedictine monks who passed on their knowledge of book calligraphy and painting. A mountain which has been the destination for religious pilgrims as far back as the ninth century, and dozens of present-day golf courses which have attracted an equal number of zealots during the 20th century.

Upper Swabia, of course, borders on Germany's [Lake Constance](#) (German: *Bodensee*) which covers nearly 550 sq km or 341 sq mi in a basin which spent extends from the Alps to the [Swabian Alb](#). Lake Constance is fed not only by the Rhine, but by an astonishing 235 other streams and rivers pouring in not only from Germany but from Austria and Switzerland as well.

Lake Constance and Upper Swabia are perfect vacation spots for solo travelers as well as families. Here the latest in 21st-century attractions stand side-by-side with an aged volcanic landscape of medieval villages with their castles, churches, and market squares. Here you can book a seat on a hot air balloon for a 90-minute flight over Lake Constance one day only to be visiting the Federsee Archaeology Park the following day. You'll be transported back to the Stone Age, when reindeer hunters were stalking their prey through the Federsee marshes.

The Baroque architecture of *Oberschwaben's* churches dominates the 310 miles (500 km) of the [Upper Swabian Baroque Route](#). Biking it will show you why Upper Swabia is known as "The Baroque Kingdom of Heaven." The Route's main branch begins and ends in the city of [Ulm](#), where you'll be awestruck at the sight of the 528-foot (161 m) spire of the Ulm Münster, the tallest church tower on earth (!).

The route will also take you through the town of [Weingarten](#), and if you could time your vacation to arrive there for the Friday after Ascension Thursday, you'll be in for the treated lifetime. On that day, known as *Blutfreitag* (English: Blood Friday) more than 3,000 horsemen descend on the meadows and fields surrounding the town, bringing with them Weingarten's "Holy Blood" relic, believed to contain the blood of Christ. The relic dates back to 1094.

The second largest Festival of the Holy Blood in Germany takes place in the spa town of Bad Wurzach. It's just one of the many attractions which bring visitors to Upper Swabia's spa towns by the thousands each year. The mud baths at Bad Wurzach are amazingly effective in treating joint disease and spinal cord injuries. Hiking, horseback riding, and tennis are also popular activities here.

One long-lasting memory you'll probably carry from your vacation in *Oberschwaben* is that of the scent of hops growing in the fields. Around the town of [Tett nang](#) (with three castles!) to the south of Weingarten, hops have been grown since the 12th century. April 23 is celebrated as Beer Day all over Germany.

If you're here that time, celebrate at the Bräuhaus Ummendorf, where you can follow a brewery tour with a meal of Swabian cuisine at a *Gasthof*. Don't miss such Upper Swabian delights as *Maultaschen* (ravioli with spinach and meat), *Fladlesuppe* (broth with strips of pancake) or *Käsepätzle* (spaetzle with cheese).

Biking, beer, and beauty everywhere you go — that's a vacation in *Oberschwaben*. :-)