

# Baden-Württemberg



If one word could sum up Baden-Württemberg, it would surely be inventive. Some 35,000 years ago, cavemen in the Swabian Alps gave the world figurative art and so sparked a string of firsts. Germany's southwesternmost state is the birthplace of Albert Einstein, DNA (Miescher) and the astronomical telescope (Kepler). It was here that Bosch invented the spark plug; Gottlieb Daimler, the gas engine; and Count Ferdinand, the zeppelin. And where would we be without Black Forest cake, cuckoo clocks and the ultimate beer food, the pretzel?

It's as much as travellers can do to tear their gaze away from the bewitching scenery, shifting from terraced vineyards between Heidelberg and Stuttgart to the Swabian Alps' misty castle-topped crags and the Upper Danube Valley's precipitous ravines. Swing south to Lake Constance and the pastoral picture becomes one of ripening cornfields and wetlands outlined by the jagged Swiss Alps. To the west, the fabled Black Forest serves a soothing tonic of luxuriantly green valleys, where woody farmhouses crouch below softly rounded hills.

Let your journey unfold in half-timbered villages stuck in the Middle Ages; in the baroque palaces in Karlsruhe and Ludwigsburg; in Roman-style decadence in Baden-Baden's spas; or in the here and now exploring Stuttgart's futuristic car museums and the energetic nightlife of university towns Heidelberg, Freiburg and Tübingen. Goethe, Turner, Twain and the Brothers Grimm drew inspiration from Baden-Württemberg, which time and again amazes with its roll-call of genius, incredible natural beauty and sweet eccentricities.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Gorge on the one-and-only Black Forest cake and hear the world's biggest cuckoo call in **Triberg** (p460)
- Soak up Altstadt views with a jolly punt along the Neckar in **Tübingen** (p426)
- Abandon modesty for a naked splash in the thermal waters of Baden-Baden's **Roman-Irish Bath** (p446)
- Border hop, bathe and bed down in the straw on **Lake Constance** (p467)
- Strain your neck for a good look at the world's tallest steeple topping Ulm's **Münster** (p439)



■ POPULATION: 10.75 MILLION

■ AREA: 35, 752 SQ KM

## Activities

### HIKING

Baden-Württemberg practically coined the word wanderlust as the base of the **Schwarzwaldverein** ([www.schwarzwaldverein.de](http://www.schwarzwaldverein.de), in German), Germany's first hiking club founded in Freiburg in 1864. Whether it's to be leisurely strolls through Stuttgart's vineyards and Lake Constance's orchards, or multiday hikes into the darkest depths of the Black Forest, nearly everywhere in this hike-friendly state has well-maintained, signposted trails and lodgings where muddy boots are not an issue.

Local tourist offices stock maps and can suggest day hikes, but for longer treks check the website [www.wanderbares-deutschland.de](http://www.wanderbares-deutschland.de) (in German). **Wandern Ohne Gepäck** ([www.wandern-ohne-gepaeck.com](http://www.wandern-ohne-gepaeck.com), in German) is a savvy initiative where walkers can hit the trail without luggage on two Black Forest routes, including a three-day hike from Freudenstadt (p448). The 1:50,000 scale maps produced by the Landesvermessungsamt and Kompass are recommended.

### CYCLING

Thousands of kilometres of signed cycling routes criss-cross Baden-Württemberg, a great place to exchange autobahn speeding for two-wheel cruising. The state's cycling appeal reaches from gentle spins around Lake Constance to the uphill slog and invigorating scenery of mountain biking in the Black Forest. For free-wheeling with watery views, try these:

**Badensee-Radweg** Loops around Lake Constance and through three countries: Germany, Switzerland and Austria (see p467).

**Donautal-Radweg** ([www.donau-radweg.info](http://www.donau-radweg.info)) Traces the mighty Danube from Donaueschingen (65km east of Freiburg) to Ulm (190km northeast of Donaueschingen), continuing to Vienna, Budapest and beyond.

**Neckartal-Radweg** ([www.neckartal-radweg.de](http://www.neckartal-radweg.de), in German) Shadows the Neckar River for 357km from Villingen-Schwenningen northward to Tübingen, Stuttgart and Heidelberg.

**Rheintal-Weg** Follows the Rhine from Konstanz westward to Basel and then northward via Freiburg (or Breisach) to Baden-Baden, Heidelberg, Mannheim and beyond.

**Veloroute Rhein** Traces the Rhine River along its left bank (in France and then Germany) and the right bank from Basel northward to Mannheim (415km).

## Getting There & Around

**Stuttgart airport** ([www.stuttgart-airport.com](http://www.stuttgart-airport.com)), Baden-Württemberg's largest, is a hub for the low-cost airline **Germanwings** ([www.germanwings.com](http://www.germanwings.com)). Frankfurt airport is about 75km north of Mannheim. Other useful airports include the Basel-Mulhouse **EuroAirport** ([www.euroairport.com](http://www.euroairport.com)), where budget airlines easyJet and Ryanair operate. **Karlsruhe-Baden-Baden airport** (Baden Airpark; [www.badenairpark.de](http://www.badenairpark.de)) and **Friedrichshafen airport** ([www.fly-away.de](http://www.fly-away.de)) are both served by Ryanair among other airlines.

Trains, trams and/or buses serve almost every city, town and village in this chapter, though public transport across the Black Forest can be slow, and long-distance trips (for instance Freiburg to Konstanz) may involve several changes. Available at train stations, the great-value Deutsche Bahn **Baden-Württemberg Ticket** allows 2nd-class travel on trains and some buses, costing €19 for an individual and €28 for up to five people. Most Black Forest hotels issue guests with the **Schwarzwald-Gästekarte** (p444), providing free use of the local public transport network.

## STUTT GART

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Ask many Germans their opinion about the Stuttgarters and they will go off on a tangent: they are smooth operators behind a Mercedes wheel, speeding along the autobahn while flashing and gesticulating; they are city slickers in designer suits with a Swabian drawl; they are tight-fisted homebodies who slave away to *schaffe, schaffe, Häusle baue* (work, work, build a house). So much for the stereotypes.

Blessed with a prosperous air, a finger on the pulse of technology and an endearing love of the great outdoors, the real Stuttgart immediately challenges such preconceptions. One minute you're touring space-age car museums, the next you're strapping on boots to hike through vineyards, dining on Michelin-starred cuisine or shimmying beside ubercool 20-somethings in the bars on Theodor-Heuss-Strasse.

Progressive, open-minded and strikingly self-assured, Stuttgart cherishes its traditions, stays true to its rural heritage and embraces innovation with a passion.