

# Regensburg, Eastern Bavaria & the Bavarian Forest



Threading through Eastern Bavaria's patchwork of bleached gold and green fields, white-washed red-roofed villages, dense forests and vibrant cities is one of the world's most celebrated waterways, the Danube. This epic river has captured the imagination of poets, painters and composers, and delivered the region power and prosperity.

For over two millennia, the Danube has lured Celts, Romans, missionaries, kings, Kaisers, merchants, and, more recently, international cruise goers, to Eastern Bavaria. Even so, its charms remain far removed from the theme-park feel of Neuschwanstein or the see-and-be-seen slopes of Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Life is unhurried, the locals are welcoming and genuinely glad to see you, and their traditions haven't been hijacked by Hollywood or kitsch promoters.

The region's centrepiece, the Unesco-listed city of Regensburg, is a vibrant blend of medieval architecture and 21st-century verve, and an ideal starting point for your explorations: Landshut's proud castle, Straubing's treasure-packed churches and Passau's riverside Altstadt (old town) are all easily reached from here. Blanketing the far-eastern edge, the mountains and valleys of the Bavarian Forest shelter a centuries-old tradition of glass-making and pristine hiking and skiing, along with Germany's oldest national park, the Nationalpark Bayerischer Wald. Combine this with some of the country's lowest-priced quality lodging, and Bavaria's east makes an affordable, active and unforgettable getaway.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Scaling the sheer marble staircase to encounter a pantheon of Germany's greatest minds and achievers at the opulent temple **Walhalla** (p202)
- Forging through the heart of the **Bavarian Forest** (p209) on its single-track railway as spruce branches smack the carriage windows on either side
- Savouring local brews in river-front **beer gardens** (p200) with the romantic skyline of Regensburg as a backdrop
- Dining beneath the vines or in the candlelit cellar of Passau's historic **Heilig-Geist-Stift-Schenke** (p207)
- Taking a pilgrimage to the pope's hometown, the little village of **Markt am Inn** (boxed text, p209)





## REGENSBURG

☎ 0941 / pop 150,000 / elev 330m

At once ancient and vibrant, Regensburg is one of Bavaria's most beautiful cities and among the best-preserved medieval towns in Europe. Its magic reveals itself in countless, often surprising, places. You'll find it in a leafy beer garden on the banks of the Danube, in the Altstadt's honeycomb of lane-ways and beneath the soaring spires of the Dom (cathedral). This is a city where you can eat pasta in a former Gothic chapel, lean against a wall erected by the Romans and prowl the corridors of a royal residence bigger than Buckingham Palace. You'll also find spirited nightlife (thanks to 25,000 university students), no fewer than three local breweries

and enough engaging sights to keep you busy for at least a couple of days.

## History

'Regensburg is so beautifully situated, someone had to settle here,' rhapsodised Goethe. And indeed, that's what's happened: the Romans built a fortress housing a 6000-strong legion here in 179 AD, marking their northern boundary; St Boniface founded a bishopric; and the Bavarian dukes made the town their capital.

Regensburg's prominence rose steadily through the Middle Ages, and so did its fortunes, especially after the completion of the Steinerne Brücke (Stone Bridge), which put the city at the crossroads of both the east-west