



BAVARIAN BEER RIDE

Cycle through the greatest concentration of breweries on Earth – pacing yourself in this corner of Germany is more about quantity of beer than fitness.

As I pedal through the Aisch Valley in Bavaria, the bars I'm thinking about are not handlebars. In this quiet, seemingly sober valley, things aren't quite as they seem. Beyond the facade of neat villages and cornfields is what's said to be the highest concentration of breweries in the world – the equivalent of about one brewery every 0.6 miles (1km) through the valley. This is one ride in which I'm not being slowed by headwinds or hills, but by temptation.

I'm midway through a three-day cycle trip from Nuremberg to Rothenburg ob der Tauber that's almost entirely defined by liquid: the Main Danube Canal, the Aisch River and, most importantly, the amber stream known as beer. The Aisch Valley is the ride's centrepiece, but in this part of Bavaria, beer is a recurring theme.

I begin my ride in Nuremberg, following the Main Danube Canal north. Hovering high above the water is the canal towpath, peering down onto canal boats as they slip through a series of locks. Flowering canola fields colour the land, and towns betray themselves by the sudden presence of joggers and other cyclists on the unfailingly flat path.

This day I have the pick of around 40 beer gardens that sit beside, or near to, the canal. I choose the town of Forchheim, once part of the Franconian royal court and now a cobblestoned monument to beer. Though there are a couple of breweries at the heart of the town, I pedal to its outskirts and the forested hill of Kellerberg.

Burrowed into the slopes of Kellerberg are more than a dozen caves used over the centuries to store beer at a constant

temperature of 6°C to 10°C. Today the cool caves serve as cellar pubs.

Beneath Kellerberg's tall trees, those in search of beer nirvana wander up the slopes to the pubs. I pedal past them all, parking my bike against the wall of one cellar pub. It's fair to say that when I ride back out an hour or so later, I'm a little less steady on the bike than when I arrived.

The Aisch River is a just few miles ahead, pouring into the canal, but this day I ride on past its mouth, continuing beside the canal,



