World-leading car-town it may be, but **STUTTGART** is certainly no Detroit. Instead the Baden-Württemberg capital is surprisingly small (population 600,000), laidback and leafy. Its idyllic setting in the palm of a valley – where vineyards thrive – and its multitude of parks often seem to shape it more than the presence of industrial giants. Consequently, you’re not likely to spend much time in its centre: many of Stuttgart’s best sights are spread across and beyond the hills that surround the city where you can find good hikes among **vineyards** and between Stuttgart’s celebrated rustic wine bars: *Weinstuben*. The attractions on Stuttgart’s southern fringes include the **Zahnradbahn**, an aged rack-railway, that leads to a **Fernsehturm** (TV tower), for expansive city views. On the western side of the city stands eighteenth-century **Schloss Solitude**, while to the north is **Höhenpark Killesberg**, of interest for the **Weissenhofsiedlung** collection of Bauhaus buildings. Just east of here, and alongside the Neckar River is **Rosensteinpark**, where natural history is given a thorough treatment, from its paleontological beginnings in the **Museum am Löwentor** to a fine botanic garden and zoo. On the opposite bank of the Neckar lies **Bad Cannstatt**, an old spa-town which became part of Stuttgart in 1905, but which still feels distinct. Though traditionally known for its mineral baths, these days it’s as famous as the birthplace of the car and **Mercedes**, which has a terrific museum here. An ex-employee of that company spawned Porsche nearby, and the achievements of that brand are celebrated in the **Porsche Museum** 9km to the north of Stuttgart’s centre. All these attractions are readily reachable on Stuttgart’s excellent public transport system. **Brief history** The town – and its name – has its origins in a stud farm, or “Stutengarten” established in 950 AD and a black stallion still graces the city’s heraldic crest. It developed as a trade centre and in 1311 became the seat of the Württemberg family. However, the city only really took regional control once Napoleon made Württemberg a kingdom and Stuttgart its capital in 1805. Eighty years later Daimler and Benz mapped out Stuttgart’s future as a motor city. The town’s industrial prowess was duly punished by World War II when bombs rained on the Altstadt. The rebuilt town feels rather bereft of history, though there’s no shortage of high culture in its heavyweight museums, particularly the **Staatsgalerie**’s art collections and the archeological treasures of **Landesmuseum Württemberg**.