As a giant body of water with a balmy dry climate, the **Bodensee**, or **Lake Constance**, has long been Germany’s Riviera. It hugs the country’s southwest border with Austria and Switzerland where the Alps rear up, creating a fine backdrop. Most German towns along the lake dot the north shore and include the idyllic island-town of **Lindau**, the transport hub of **Friedrichshafen** and the archetypal medieval lakeside settlement **Meersburg**. The upbeat city of **Konstanz** on its southern shore is the most cosmopolitan place on the lake, and easily the best base with regular ferry services across the lake and to nearby **islands**. Given the good weather, the Bodensee region is known for outdoor activities, particularly hiking and cycling on trails that connect small lakeside towns, vineyards, orchards and beaches. Watersports are also popular, but most visitors simply sunbathe, swim and mess around in the water, which averages a pleasant 20°C in the summer, providing a respite from the humidity. Summer is the most popular holiday season, but popularity brings congested roads and booked-up hotels, making spring a better time to visit, when fruit trees blossom; autumn, meanwhile, is prime time for those interested in the wine harvest.