

Biking Bavaria: Travel the Romantic Road

Thinking about the Germany of days past conjures up images of a lederhosen-wearing, beer-slinging, sausage-consuming folk. In Bavaria, the most southern of the German states, such scenes still pepper the countryside.

Bavaria is also one of the most beautiful German states with its forests, rolling hills, and the Alps mountain range gracing its southernmost border. Capitalizing on Bavaria's unscarred beauty, enterprising travel agents in post-war Germany created the *Romantischestraße* out of an old medieval trade route. Known in English as the Romantic Road, this highway stretches 221 miles through Bavaria and leads from Würzburg in the North to Füssen in the deep South.

The most authentically German way to explore the Romantic Road is by bike. The official Romantic Road travel agency, supported by the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology, offers free GPS downloads of the bicycling route. And there are several services that will cart your luggage from city to city so you don't have to worry about anything except the bike and the scenery. Along the way, the road provides access to some of the oldest towns in Germany with rich cultural heritages to explore.

Würzburg

Start your journey in the scenic Baroque town of Würzburg. Despite heavy bombing during World War II, this city still offers one of the most splendid examples of baroque architecture in Germany: the Würzburg Residenz. This stately structure once housed Franconian prince-bishops and is now a tourist attraction boasting detailed stucco art and painted ceilings. Würzburg also hosts the first spring fair in Bavaria, held three weeks

before Easter every year. Walk around the baroque-and English-style gardens for free. You can also enjoy carnival rides, games, food, and traditional dancing.

Rothenburg ob der Tauber

41 miles (66 km) south of Würzburg

The small town of Rothenburg ob der Tauber is one of only three remaining walled cities in Germany. Biking in this part of the country is relaxing because the route is flat and the bike paths are well marked along low-traffic country roads. Once you reach Rothenburg, you'll be awed by its examples of perfectly preserved medieval architecture, city planning, and lifestyles. The best way to experience Rothenburg's beauty is by simply wandering around the town, taking in the sights, visiting the markets, and perusing the local shops. For two euros, you can also climb to the top of the town hall tower, built in 1250 AD, and experience an all-encompassing view of the city.

Nördlingen

56 miles (90 km) south of Rothenburg

Biking farther south, you'll reach another famous walled German town, Nördlingen. This town is much smaller than Rothenburg and is decidedly less crowded. Interestingly, the town lies in a bowl caused by a meteorite impact, making the town feel more secluded.

Walk along the city walls for beautiful views of the city and the surrounding countryside.

Füssen

110 miles (177 km) south of Nördlingen

The farther south you travel along the Romantic Road, the hillier the path becomes. But don't worry—it's worth it. Nestled in the foothills of the Alps, Neuschwanstein is a

nineteenth-century castle that towers over the town of Füssen. On your way to Füssen, get your camera out because Neuschwanstein is the most photographed site in Germany.

Reaching this magnificent castle requires a short hike up a paved path, which will lead you past another castle called Hohenschwangau. Neuschwanstein's grounds feature beautiful views of the valley and the Alps. Walk to a footbridge off to the side and you can see Neuschwanstein in its entirety snuggled up against the Alps and the picturesque valley below, with Füssen in the distance. The castle is a perfect end to our biking trip through Germany's most pristine country.

—Bekah Claussen

www.germany.travel/en/search-results.html?q=romantic+road