

Bavaria

Bavaria (German, *Bayern*) is the largest federal state ("Bundesländer" or shortened to *Länder*) of Germany, situated in the south-east of the country, and extends from the North German Plain down into the Alps. Bavaria is what many non-Germans probably have in mind when they think about Germany. Ironically, Bavaria has more in common culturally with neighboring Austria than the rest of Germany. This stereotype includes *Lederhosen* (leather pants), sausages and lots of beer - Bavaria, however, has much more to offer to the traveler. Along with the Rheinland and Berlin, it is Germany's most popular tourist destination.

Regions

- **Franconia** - formerly a separate kingdom that was merged with the rest of Bavaria by Napoleon
- **Bavarian-Swabia** (*Schwaben*)
- **Upper Palatinate** (*Oberpfalz*)
- **Upper Bavaria** (*Oberbayern*)
- **Lower Bavaria** (*Niederbayern*)

Cities

- **Munich** (*München*) - the capital of Bavaria
- **Bayreuth** - a festival city in Upper Franconia (Oberfranken)
- **Bamberg** - Historical town. The whole town of Bamberg is listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.
- **Dachau** - site of the first Nazi concentration camp in Germany and a nice old town worth seeing
- **Augsburg** - an important medieval city
- **Fürth** - small town, next to Nuremberg
- **Nuremberg** (*Nürnberg*) - a city of toys, famous Christmas Markets and the infamous Nazi Party rallies
- **Passau** - a small university town on the Austrian border
- **Regensburg** - the city on the banks of the River Danube (Donau)
- **Würzburg** - a university city in the northwest of Bavaria
- **Rosenheim** - a small city in the southeast of Bavaria near the alps
- **Rothenburg ob der Tauber** - a town in the Franconia region of Bavaria, well known for its well-preserved medieval old town
- **Bad Reichenhall** - A small spa town in the alps

Other destinations

- For information about Bavarian palaces and castles see this official page: <http://www.schloesser.bayern.de/englisch/palace/index.htm>
- **Ammersee**
- **Berchtesgaden** - ski resort in the southeast
- **Bayrischer Wald** - locals call it "Bayrisch Sibiria" for the obvious reasons
- **Chiemsee** - the largest lake within Bavaria
- **Erding** - famous for "Erddinger Weissbier"
- Garmisch-Partenkirchen - see the highest mountain in Germany (Zugspitze) ski resort south of Munich: hosted the Olympic games
- **Kloster Andechs** - monastery that is famous for its beer
- **Königsee** - the deepest lake in the alps
- **Lindau** - the Bavarian port at Lake Constance (Bodensee)
- **Mittenwald** - famous for its nicely painted houses
- **Oberammergau** - famous for painted houses, wood-carved sculptures and the decennial passion play
- **Rothenburg ob der Tauber** - famous for its intact medieval *Altstadt* encircled by 13th century town walls
- **Rottach-Egern** - poshest place in Bavaria
- **Schongau** is a part of the so called "Romantic Road"
- **Schwanngau** - visit castle Neuschwanstein, the "Walt Disney castle"
- **Starnberg** has a very beautiful lake
- **Tegernsee** very posh place
- **Füssen** - small town rich in culture and art, and only a few kilometers to famous Schloss Neuschwanstein

Understand

Bavarians are the proudest of all Germans. Locals are loyal to their roots and traditions. Bavaria is also the most autonomous of German states, and many Bavarians see themselves as Bavarians first and foremost, Germans second.

Most Bavarians can speak the Bavarian dialect (Bairisch). The dialect, however, is extremely difficult for most other Germans to understand—a person from Niedersachsen (Lower Saxony) would have a hard time understanding a Bavarian. Ironically, an Austrian however would not! Despite the dialect difference from the rest of Germany, most Bavarians can lose the dialect at any moment.

About 60% of Bavarians are Catholic and are usually more conservative than the rest of Germany (or Europe for that matter). Munich, however, is a pretty liberal city with a huge number of people from other parts of Germany, Europe, and the world, and it has a large English-speaking community. It can be quite hard to find someone with truly Bavarian origins in the city, as most people come to work there and only stay for some time.

Get in

Train, air, or car. Bavaria is very accessible.

By plane

International travellers wishing to visit Bavaria should have no problems to book a flight to Munich, which is home to a large international airport. Alternatively, if there is no direct flight to Munich with your airline, you could book a flight via Frankfurt or Nuremberg and travel to Munich with the ICE high speed train.

By train

The German rail company often has cheap ticket deals. Overnight travel to many cities in Europe can be less than 30 euros. You will need to book well ahead of time.

<http://www.bahn.de/p/view/index.shtml>

If coming from the Czech Republic, it's often cheaper to buy a Czech ticket to the border and then continue with Bayern-Ticket (see Get Around).

If coming from Austria, it's often cheaper to use the Einfach-Raus Ticket, much like the Bayern-Ticket (see Get Around) is used within Bavaria.

Get around

By Train

Trains are the main mode of transportation for visitors, since they easily connect towns with larger cities.

If you're travelling within Bavaria, you can purchase the **Bavaria Ticket** (*Bayern-Ticket*), which will give you all-day travel within Bavaria and even to the border towns of Salzburg or Reutte. If there are two or more people travelling together, it would be cheaper to buy an up-to-5-person Bayern-Ticket. Some locals look for other people to share a journey with to reduce costs. Some even sold their Bayern ticket for a discount after arriving at their destination to recoup some of their funds. In response, the German railway corporation, *Deutsche Bahn*, <http://www.bahn.de/> now offers mainly Bayern-Tickets that require you to write your name on the ticket in order to validate it, thus making it harder to sell the ticket to someone else once your journey is over.

http://www.bayern-takt.de/public_main_modul.php?ses=&page_id=299&document_id=380&unit=482731bfd755

Note: Since April 2007 in German regional trains, it is no longer possible to buy tickets from the train conductor.

Talk

German is spoken throughout Bavaria - there are also four main dialects which will be difficult to understand for most foreigners: Bairisch (Bavarian), Fränkisch (Franconian) and Schwäbisch. Most people speak at least some English, or other foreign languages, especially the younger generation.

See

Bavaria has many family-friendly places, as well as those for the younger generations. Places to see include the walled city of **Rothenburg ob der Tauber** (Rothenburg o.d.T.), Schloss (castle) HerrenChiemsee - Ludwig the second's unfinished castle based on Versailles and on its own island on the beautiful lake Chiemsee, the historical city of Nurnburg, the scenic city of Regensburg (Visit St. Peter's cathedral, you can't miss it as it is the biggest building in Regensburg), Bodenmais - known for its fine crystal and known as the "Switzerland of Bavaria", and of course the legendary Neuschwanstein castle often called the "fairytale castle"--the basis for the "Magic Kingdom" of Walt Disney. Of course for kids there is Playmobil Park near Nurnburg, Trampoline indoor Funpark in Regensburg, and the town of Riedenburg on the Altmühl River that has a castle with daily Falconry shows.

Also, *many* towns have some historical features in their limits. There are castle ruins, full castles still being used as residences, local museums, caves, and old mines that most tourists will never see. Some of these are better than the 25 Euro fee to see a boring guided tour at one of the more famous cities in Germany. Why pay a fee for only seeing a small part of the castle when you can find an old castle in the countryside that you can explore and maybe discover something new that is not even documented?

It's sad to see tourists who pay too much money to see "tourist castles" when for the price of a rental car and a will to explore can yield many free or cheap sites sometimes better than the overpriced attractions that limit what you can see or do.

Do

Bavaria has very good ski and snowboard resorts in the Bavarian Alps and in the Bavarian Forest. They are much smaller than the resorts in Austria or Switzerland. They are always well maintained and usually cheaper. The most famous and crowded are in Garmish and Oberstdorf.

Eat

Bavarian cuisine is famous for "Schweinsbraten" roast from pig, "Bratwürstl" sausages, "Nürnberger Bratwurst", probably the smallest sausage in Germany, "Weisswurst" sausage made from veal, "Leberkäse" meatloaf, "Schweinshaxe" grilled pork leg as well

as a variety of different “Knödel” dumplings and “Kartoffelsalat” potato salad. Also in the Oberallgäu, the southwestern most part of Bavaria, the traditional food is “Kässpatzen”, made with much Bavarian cheese. Also, some Gasthaus's have various season specials based on what is available locally at that time. There can be specials like Truffle dishes in the southern mountain areas, specialty mushrooms in the Oberpfalz area, seasonal Salmon dishes on the Donau / Altmühl river area, local trout specials in all small villages, and during hunting season there are occasional fresh wild boar and venison dishes - Bavaria is a gastronomic wonderland!

Drink

Beer

Bavarians love their beer. One of the most beloved is the "Weissbier". It is a cloudy, unfiltered beer brewed with wheat (it has a slightly sour taste) commonly consumed earlier in the day with a Weisswurst and sweet mustard. It's good to know that there exists a special ritual with this beer: Normally it will be served in a special glass, called "weissbiereglas". But if you get the empty glass and the bottle with beer, you have to fill in by yourself - in one step without dropping the bottle. Weissbier is more carbonated than most other beers and produces a lot of foam so it is not easy to fill without spilling something.

Bavaria could opt for the title of "holy grail of brewing". Not only is it home to Oktoberfest, but the highest brewery density (in the world) is in the north of the state, in the Franconian region. There, you can find a brewery in almost every village (it is sometimes very small and maintained among a few families). You can find a lot of local beer specialities, as for instance the "Bamberger Schlenkerla" (a beer with a taste of smoked bacon), so try to stick with the local beers always—especially tasty (and supposedly healthy) are the unfiltered beers (only served in pubs).

In summer, you can generally find **beer festivals** everywhere - not only in the bigger cities, but also in the smaller villages; be warned though that the beer there is often served in one-liter ceramic or glass glasses called "Mass". The biggest certainly is the Munich Oktoberfest, followed in second place by the Erlangen Bergkirchweih.

<http://www.oktoberfest.de/>

Brandy

Germans generally make brandy out of everything; most common are the fruit brandies (Obstler) and the herb liqueurs (e.g., Sechssämertropfen from northern Bavaria). For a real Altbayerisch felling try Bärwurz, Kräuterwurz, or Blutwurz.

Wines

The north of Bavaria is famous not only for its beer, but also for its (white) wines that come in special bottles called "Bocksbeutel" (bottles with a big round yet flat belly). For a sweet treat try Eiswine, made from grapes allowed to stay until the first hard freeze then pressed and made into a *very* sweet wine.

Stay safe

Statistically, Bavaria is one of the safest regions (if not the safest) in Germany and probably Europe. The biggest threat to your wallet are the (perfectly legal) high prices.

Be aware that there is a big difference between the Bavarian police and the police from maybe Hamburg or Berlin. In Berlin it might not be a problem if they find 2 or 3 joints in your pocket (because you may carry it for your own needs), in Bavaria it definitely is a big problem for you. Opposed to this you won't have any problems if you drink alcohol in public (if you are over 16 years old).

For more info see: www.wikipedia.org

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