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Bavaria's Holiday Routes

Themed routes provide a myriad of ways to discover Germany's most popular holiday destination

From medieval fortresses to crystal museums, magnificent castles and places of religious pilgrimage, Bavaria has it all and more. The state's numerous vacation routes provide visitors with an extensive network of tourist routes and itineraries linking some of Bavaria's most appealing and interesting sites.

From Mannheim to Prague, seventy castles line the **Castle Road** which follows the Neckar River and winds its way through upper Bavaria. History comes alive while the past has left its imprint on the towns of Nuremberg, Bamberg, Coburg, Rothenburg, and Bayreuth. www.castleroad.de Thick walls and eighty ancient towers surround Nuremberg's old quarter including the Kaiser Fortress, a former residence of German kings. The Documentation Center and its permanent exhibit, Fascination and Power, are vital for anyone interested in the period of National Socialism. www.tourismus.nuernberg.de

Also on the Castle Road is Rothenburg ob der Tauber, famous for the Kaethe Wohlfahrt's Christmas Stores and Christmas Museum www.bestofchristmas.com, and for its medieval atmosphere, stately towers, massive fortifications, churches and patrician houses. www.rothenburg.de Further north in the Franconian region of Bavaria, is Bamberg. Perched along the River Regnitz, Bamberg is home to Germany's famous smoky beer and the town's many fine breweries that welcome visitors. Unbeknownst to most, Bamberg was for a short time the capital of the Holy Roman Empire. Today, the city is a UNESCO world heritage site and visitors relish the romantic, medieval setting and beautifully preserved buildings. www.bamberg.info

Still deep in the Franconian countryside is the town of Bayreuth famous for its annual Wagner Festival in the baroque opera house funded by none other than the famous King Ludwig of Neuschwanstein fame. In Bayreuth, the gardens, courtyard, and the orangerie of the Hermitage and the Old Palace form one of Germany's top gardens. www.bayreuth-tourismus.de

Close by, the aristocratic city of Coburg is home to many fine castles including the Veste Coburg fortress which today houses internationally-acclaimed art collections from the private collections of the Coburg dukes. In the orangerie in the Rosenau Castle, the boyhood home of Prince Albert and a favorite spot of Queen Victoria, is the Museum of Modern Glass which is part of the Veste Coburg's collection. At one point, Coburg was also the center of toy and doll making. Next year, the International Doll Festival will take place April 27 to May 4. www.coburg-tourist.de

Glassblowing is a centuries-old tradition and still an important part of the East Bavarian economy today. Along the **Crystal Road**, which runs through the Bavarian forest, there are museums, galleries and glassworks where you can take lessons in glassblowing and visit courses or just shop. www.cometogermany.com Passau is a famous stop along the route with its three rivers, large square and baroque buildings. A highlight in Passau is the Glass Museum where over 30,000 examples of glassware for the past 250 years are on display. Since May, a new crystal boat, the Crystal Cruiser, exclusively made out of crystals by the famous Swarovski Company, cruises the Bavarian-Austrian Danube Region on a daily two

hour roundtrip. www.passau.de

Regensburg, further down the river Danube, is home to two thousand years of living history. Some of Europe's most important architectural and cultural monuments, plus fascinating museums and art collections make this an attractive place to spend some time. The History Museum in the former Minorite monastery houses art and cultural history collections from the Stone Age to the 19th century. The Thurn and Taxis Museum is a private collection of priceless furniture and decorative objects from the 17th to 19th centuries. www.regensburg.de

Visitors to Bavaria can also follow in the Footsteps of Pope Benedict XVI along the **Benedict Trail** . In 2005, Josef Ratzinger was elected Pope Benedict XVI and head of the Catholic Church. Now pilgrims and travelers can trace the life and career of Pope Benedict XVI to places along the 'Benedict Trail' where Pope Benedict spent his childhood and youth. The churches, abbeys and historical towns in the region are filled with cultural treasures and exquisite works of art. www.benediktweg.info As a boy, the Pope made the pilgrimage to Altötting, the home of the black Madonna. www.altoetting.de

Visitors can also hike the German Alpine Road, learn about the white gold along the Porcelain Road, cycle along the German Danube Trail, experience European history and culture along the Route of Emperors and Kings, follow in the footsteps of the Empress and Queen Elisabeth on the Sisi Road and discover hidden treasures on the Toy Road. For more information about holiday routes in Bavaria go to www.bavaria.by

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