Journey to the most spectacular landscapes on earth, the Alpine nations of Switzerland, Germany and Austria. Begin at any point on the map to follow a route that leads to places where you can indulge your passions for the great outdoors, history, art, fine food and wine, music and festivals. Below, find suggestions and insider tips for your visit to this magnificent mountain region.

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Good to know...

Driving the Absolutely Alps itinerary is uncomplicated and offers the greatest flexibility and freedom: you explore at your own pace. Roads are well maintained, whether you select a superhighway or a meandering byway.

Gasoline
Most petrol stations are closed at night, even on motorways; self-service petrol pumps remain open.

Emergencies
Emergency telephones are available on motorways, larger roads and in the mountains. Motorist help calls can also be made from any telephone 24hr a day by dialing: Austria 120, Germany 112 and Switzerland 140.

Car Rental
There are car rental agencies at airports and downtown locations in most larger cities. Except at airports, rental agencies are closed Sundays. Smaller vehicles have manual transmissions; automatics require advance reservations. Drivers must be over 21 years of age.

Include satellite navigation in your rental package to reduce stress during the journey.

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Most petrol stations are closed at night, even on motorways; self-service petrol pumps remain open.

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Road Regulations
Reflective Safety Vest
Drivers are required to carry a reflective safety vest in their car at all times. This new regulation is required by law and is subject to heavy fines. Please check with your car rental company to ensure a Reflective Safety Vest is located in the car.

Road tolls
Prior entering Austria's and Switzerland's motorways and highways, toll stickers are required on all vehicles! Stickers can be obtained from the gasoline stations as well as post offices and sundries.

Seat belts
Seat belts are compulsory and children under-12 are required to sit in the back. Dipped headlights are compulsory in tunnels. Use of the horn is discouraged except on mountain roads with blind turns.

Speed limits
Maximum speed on motorways
Switzerland 120 km/h (75 mph)
Austria 130 km/h (81 mph)
Germany no speed limit or as posted

Be sure to check when these routes are open, as most high passes close during winter.

Store Opening Times
Most shops open from 9 am to noon and 2-6.30 pm (Sat 4pm or 5pm) although in large towns they may not close for lunch.

Useful Websites
Austria.info, Germany.travel, myswitzerland.com

Driving times
The map below gives approximated driving times between some of the destinations, not counting the stop overs in between.

Best times to travel
Summer Season
May – September

Special Seasons
Oct (Wine Harvest)
Nov – Dec (Christmas Markets)
Jan - Feb (Viennese Ball Season)
March (Easter Celebrations)
Zurich
A horizon of snowcapped Alps. Over 50 museums and 100 art galleries. A renowned design scene. The liveliest nightlife in Switzerland. One of the greatest opera houses in the world. An exploding gastronomy sector. It’s no surprise Zürich so often tops international quality-of-life surveys. The so-called “metropolis of experiences,” this famously clean and efficient city consistently wins over travelers on multiple fronts, from its exclusive Bahnhofstrasse to its access to breathtaking hikes to its famed jewelry, fashion and watches.

zuerich.com

The fairy tale-like Dolder Grand is synonymous with exclusivity, relaxation and stunning vistas. Located between the pulsating city and a peaceful green zone, the five-star hotel offers magnificent views of Zurich, the lake and the Alps all at once. Within the city itself, the deluxe Widder Hotel consists of nine medieval heritage buildings, conveniently located in the heart of the Old Town. The penthouse suite features a rooftop terrace with unparalleled postcard views.

doldergrand.com, widderhotel.ch

Zurich exploded onto the international culinary scene in recent years. A variety of restaurants exists, starting with the Zunfthaus zur Waag, a traditional house dating to 1315; locals still enjoy the traditional food, not far from the Cathedral Grossmünster. The Hilli Restaurant, open since 1898, is a vegetarian mecca with the city’s largest salad buffet. At Quali 61, light, market-fresh dishes are served alongside breathtaking views of the city, the Alps and the lake, whose banks it occupies.

zunfthaus-zur-waag.ch, Hilli, quai61.ch

The gateway to central Switzerland, Lucerne has long drawn travelers dazzled by the surrounding mountain panorama and the city’s perch on gorgeous Lake Lucerne. The nearby mountains Rigi, Pilatus and Stanserhorn offer unforgettable hikes, while the souvenir and watch shops in town deliver premiere shopping. And of course the famed Chapel Bridge has formed the centerpiece of Lucerne’s townscape since the 14th century – and is one of Europe’s oldest, covered wooden bridges.

lucerne.com

Located near the Lion Monument in the center of the city, the handsome Old Swiss House is one of the most photographed attractions around. For its part, the Opus is a lively, unpretentious wine bar, set within a pair of interconnected medieval buildings and opening onto views of the river. In summer, Swiss folklore comes alive at the Stadtkeller, over platters of smoked pork and accompanied by rollicking folk music.

oldswisshouse.ch, restaurant-opus.ch, Stadtkeller

The Park Hotel Weggis, situated right on the shores of Lake Lucerne, offers equal parts charm and sumptuous design. Enjoy your own private beach, as well as mountain views and stylish rooms/suites. The plush Montana, for its part, sits higher up above the lake, thereby affording unmatched views, not to mention 66 art deco rooms and suites, and a restaurant with 15 Gault Millau points. The Montana joined “Small Luxury Hotels of the World” in 2004.

parkweggis.ch, hotel-montana.ch

The Hergiswil Glassworks has called Lake Lucerne home since 1817. The tradition of craftsmanship lives on, via modern design. Visitors can observe the glassblowers working at the furnace, as well as a fascinating history of the operation’s evolution over time.

glass.ch

Cabaret Voltaire in the Old Town of Zurich © swiss-image.ch

Widder Hotel © swiss-image.ch

Lucerne’s lake promenade © swiss-image.ch

Cabaret Voltaire in the Old Town of Zurich © swiss-image.ch

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Lucerne’s lake promenade © swiss-image.ch

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glass.ch
Interlaken

Tucked between Lake Thun and Lake Brienz is Interlaken, a small city famed as much for its geographic identity as its storybook scenery. Three mighty mountains, Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau, tower above, while the city itself is intimate enough that visitors can get around by bicycle or on foot. Situated on an alluvial plane, Interlaken is the starting point for numerous activities. Over 45 mountain railways, cable cars, chair lifts and ski lifts service 200 kilometers of pistes and a dense network of hiking trails. Excursion ships, including historic paddle steamers, ply the waters of the two surrounding lakes.

interlaken.ch

The Tropical Hothouse Frutigen

The Tropical Hothouse Frutigen isn’t just the newest tourist attraction in the Bernese Oberland. It’s one of the most fascinating – part science experiment, part public exhibition. Every second, around 100 liters of pure mountain water flow out of the base tunnel, which also carries trains through the Lötschberg. The natural warmth of the water is used for the sustainable production of exotic fruit, caviar and, eventually, some 60,000 sturgeon. Not to be missed.
tropenhaus-frutigen.ch

EAT

The Hotel Krebs is right in the heart of Interlaken, and its attractive terrace commands unforgettable views of the peaks of the Bernese Oberland. The menu and wine list at Restaurant Benacus mirror charming elements of middle age ruin with modern accomodements. The result is an intimate atmosphere for enjoying the deelicacies that emerge its inventive kitchen.
krebshotel.ch, benacus.ch

Lausanne

Deep in the Swiss Riviera is the hilly lakeside city of Lausanne. Lake Geneva spreads out below, with vineyard-covered slopes all around. What might seem like a quaint, medieval locale – it’s largely car-free, and given to peaceful walks along the water – in fact brims with life. The nation’s highest court is based here, as is the International Olympic Committee and a mishmash of cafes, boutiques and university-centric nightlife. Rising impressively from the opposing French lakeshore are the Savoy Alps, and some of the best skiing in the world.

lausanne-tourisme.ch

The Olympic Museum

For the past century, the grand, Art Nouveau-style Lausanne Palace & Spa has offered its exclusive clientele a mix of luxury and magnificent lake views. Its four first-class resturants provide a culinary tour from France to Japan. Located in the Douchy district, the Château d’Ouchy was originally a medieval castle built by the Bishop of Lausanne in the 12th century. Today the magnificent structure, rebuilt in the neo-gothic style, represents an important landmark on the shores of Lake Geneva.
lausanne-palace.com, chateaudouchy.ch

EAT

In the heart of the medieval village, Le Cerf has acquired a reputation around the world, thanks largely to chef Carlo Crisci. From crawfish to frog legs, Crisci’s dishes never fail to impress. Suspended above the shores of Lake Geneva, the terrace-lounge Le Deck offers one of the most beautiful panoramas in the world – as well as market-fresh cuisine and inventive recipes.
lecerf.carlocrisci.ch, barontawieler.ch

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lausanne-palace.com, chateaudouchy.ch

EAT

Combining traditional style and spaciousness with modern luxury and comfort, the Victoria Jungfrau Grand Hotel & Spa is nestled between lakes and rivers, and offers great views of its beautiful natural surroundings. The historic hotel Giessbach Fälls paws down on Lake Brienz and the forming Giessbach waterfalls -- a small, exquisite world all its own. The unspoiled lake scenery is breathtaking.
victoria-jungfrau.ch, giessbach.ch

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krebshotel.ch, benacus.ch

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lecerf.carlocrisci.ch, barontawieler.ch

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tropenhaus-frutigen.ch

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lausanne-tourisme.ch

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lausanne-palace.com, chateaudouchy.ch

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lecerf.carlocrisci.ch, barontawieler.ch

Lausanne
Zermatt

Zermatt lies at the foot of the Matterhorn, perhaps the world’s most famous mountain. Once a quiet agricultural community, this small town became an acclaimed destination for its skiing and mountaineering offerings. The car-free vacation destination has preserved its original character and offers an unlimited array of excursions. Walking, cycling, climbing and high-Alpine tours are popular throughout summer and autumn, while winter guarantees an unmatched ski region: 360 km of pistes in three varied ski areas -- the Sunnegga-Rothorn, Gornegrat-Stockhorn, Schwarzsee and Matterhorn glacier paradise. For such an active place, the quiet and calm is staggering.

zermatt.ch

EAT

At the Le Corbeau d’Or, Alain Kuster’s gourmet cuisine will transport you to the peaks of pleasure. He lovingly tends his herb and vegetable garden and makes delicious dishes with the fresh produce. At The Omnia, Executive Chef Patrick Weber has a reputation for pure, authentic flavors in his seasonal dishes. At Chez Heini, dine in a rustic ambience, spellbound by the flavors emanating from the open fire.

hotel-mirabeau.ch, the-omnia.com, Chez Heini

STAY

With its regal facade and dramatic mountain backdrops, the Grand Hotel Zermatterhof blends with cheerfulness and warm hospitality. The luxurious Hotel Firefly is known for its attention to detail, and all 15 individual suites have a balcony – and many an open fireplace. Experience innovative design at the Hotel Matthias, an oasis of tranquility amidst the breathtaking Alpine landscape.

zermatt.hof, firefly-zermatt.ch, matthiol.ch

Ascona

Considered the “Pearl of Lake Maggiore,” the colorful southern town of Ascona is known for its cultural heritage as well as its broad appeal to travelers. With a variety of landscapes and a striking Mediterranean climate – yes, those palm trees – the lakeside gem has become a favorite holiday resort. The choice of hotels (including a dozen luxury class) is as wide as the culinary choices.

ascona-locarno.com

EAT

The SEVEN exists to awaken the senses, a place for pleasures of the palate, and of unforgettable encounters. Eclectic cuisine, a great wine list, superb architecture, ambience and sound design – and of course the unique location on the lake – create an extraordinary experience. Just a short stroll from the Piazza Grande, the restaurant Da Valentine is ideal for a romantic meal or a relaxed evening in front of a roaring fire.

seven-ascona.ch, ticino.ch

STAY

The Hotel Eden Roc has long been famous for its heavenly elements: the absolute peace and quiet, the private beach, the panoramic landing stage for boats, the luxury rooms and a veritable Garden of Eden. Ascona’s picturesque piazzas is just minutes away on foot. The intimate first-class Boutique Hotel La Rocca has its own unique view over the Brissago Islands. Experience expert traditional Mediterranean cuisine, skilfully prepared with seasonal, local ingredients.

Hotel Eden Roc, hotel-la-rocca.ch

The Centovalli Railway connects the Ticino and the Valais via the shortest possible route – but it’s hardly just a means of transportation. This two-hour excursion takes visitors through the magnificent landscapes of Centovalli and Valle Vigezzo. Passengers journey through the picturesque “One Hundred Valleys,” over deep gorges and crevices with glittering cascading waterfalls, across verdant alpine meadows, over breathtaking bridges and through vineyards and forests of chestnut trees.

centovalli.ch
Situated on the southern side of the Swiss Alps, Engadin St. Moritz is known throughout the world as the “festival hall of the Alps.” With its bright, sunny days, its mineral springs and a pleasant climate, the resort town is a favorite among the Swiss and international travelers alike. Piz Bernina is the only four-thousander in the eastern Alps (4,049 m. altitude). But it’s not just mountains here. Engadin St. Moritz has a fascinating cultural heritage. Romansch is the official main language, but German is also spoken, as is Italian in the neighboring valleys. French at the Club Med, and English at the Cresta Run. The result is a cultural hodgepodge that can’t help but result in a memorable trip.

stmoritz.ch

As you’d expect of a five-star luxury hotel in the heart of the Swiss Alps, Badrutt’s Palace Hotel offers every conceivable service. The comfort of each guest is paramount, as has been the case across its great lineage. The Hotel Misani fuses modernity and warm hospitality with great, accessible service. The comfort of each guest is paramount, as has been the case across its great lineage. The Hotel Misani offers every conceivable service.

badruttspalace.com, hotelsmisani.ch

Bregenz may be limited to a three-country triangle, but gastronomically it casts a wide net. Fresh trout from Lake Constance is common, as are game meats from the Pfänderstock and traditional cheeses from the nearby Alps. Some favorite restaurants for these regional delicacies: The Wirts haus am See (situated directly at the lake’s shore with fantastic views), the locally beloved Zum Kornmesser, and the grand dame of them all, the Gourmet Restaurant Deuring Schloßle. wirtshaussamsee.at, kornmesser.at, deuring-schloessle.at

Elegant or rustic, romantic or relaxed: Accommodation in Bregenz is as varied as its guests’ tastes. The Seehotel Am Kaiserstrand, newly-opened in 2020, reveals not only one of Bregenz’s most glamorous pasts, it also occupies the prime spot in town: directly at the shore of Lake Constance. The Hotel Schwärzler is beloved – plus convenient to the Old Town and its diverse culture and shopping opportunities. For a more historic surrounding, the Gourmet Hotel Deuring Schloßle is located in an ivy-covered old castle.

elegant-hotel.deuring-schloessle.at

The Ricola Herb Garden is a short walk from the center of Pontresina, towards the Roseg valley. Behold the 13 herbs used in the original Ricola herb cough drops. Company founder Emil Richterich created the recipe in the summer of 1940, and it is still in use today. Small displays tell the surprisingly interesting story of those Ricola herb drops in your medicine cabinet.

Ricola-Herb-Gardens

At dusk, enjoy a truly “magic hour” high above the expansive Upper Engadin, followed by mountain dining at its most delightful – a romantic candlelight dinner at the Panorama Restaurant Muottas Muragl. The Restaurant Lej da Staz lies adjacent to the dylic Lake Staz, between St. Moritz, Ce lenina and Pontresina. It’s pure Alpine Chic – authenticity, hospitality, nature and peace dine in seamlessly here – and one of Engadin’s most bewitching spots.

lejdaostaz.ch, muottasmuragl.ch

At the internationally acclaimed Bregenz Festival, held every year in July and August, an evening of opera begins well before the conductor lifts his baton. Spectacular sunsets and dramatic views of Lake Constance set the tone for the actual performance. For four weeks audiences experience monumental productions of open sky. Orchestral concerts and theater troupes round out the festival. Its reputation for bold, edgy productions is no mystery.

bregenzfestival.com

Ascona Liechtenstein

Zermatt Switzerland

Lech Innsbruck Austria

Lucerne

Zurich

Zermatt

Augsburg

Augsburg

St. Moritz Switzerland

Ricola Herb Garden near Pontresina © swiss-image.ch

Dining with a view at the Muottas Muragl © swiss-image.ch

Dining with a view at the Muottas Muragl © swiss-image.ch

Restaurant Muottas Muragl © swiss-image.ch

Dining with a view at the Muottas Muragl © swiss-image.ch

View of Bregenz © Österreich Werbung / MaluK

Bregenz Festival © swiss-image.ch

Bregenz Festival © swiss-image.ch

Bregenz Festival © swiss-image.ch

Bregenz Festival © swiss-image.ch

Bregenz Festival © swiss-image.ch

Bregenz Festival © swiss-image.ch

Bregenz Festival © swiss-image.ch
Bregenzerwald

In the westernmost tip of Austria lies the Bregenz Forest, or Bregenzerwald. “Forest” tells only part of the story: mountains, pastures, 22 picturesque villages, a premiere skiing location, 30,000 inhabitants and almost as many cows. UNESCO has recognized the cultural significance of the region, and its farming and cheese production traditions remain largely intact. (Don’t miss the “alpine cheese.”) But age-old knowledge and skills also offer a solid foundation for innovation here – case in point, Bregenzerwald’s award-winning architecture and craftsmanship. The region is also home to the village of Schwarzenberg, whose well-preserved center – the old “Hof” – boasts a harmonious interplay of historic buildings, charming streets and quaint squares. The Baroque church, the dancing house region is also home to the village of Schwarzenberg, whose well-preserved center – the old “Hof” – boasts a harmonious interplay of historic buildings, charming streets and quaint squares. The Baroque church, the dancing house …

Lech

The Arlberg is a majestic Alpine mountain massif and one of the world’s best ski areas, as well as a great resort in summer. It consists of five charming villages: luxurious Lech, sophisticated Zürs, cozy Stuben, exclusive St. Christoph and cosmopolitan St. Anton. Lech is the shining star of the bunch, having transformed from alpine farming community into international travel destination without losing its distinctive Walser character. Energy efficiency has been an important issue for decades and is a firmly established local value – Lech is a pioneer in this field. This great respect for nature pays dividends for the visiting tourist, as it’s earned Lech the “Most Beautiful Village in Europe” award in the 2004 “Entente Florale” competition.

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Garmisch-Partenkirchen  

An hour south of Munich lies the valley resort town of Garmisch-Partenkirchen, surrounded dramatically by the majestic Alps. The town is a perfect destination for any Alpine vacation – in winter with perfect snow from November to May, or summer, with its bounty of adventure. Travelers find no shortage of arts, culture, history, sports, wellness and nature. Locals, meanwhile, still live and celebrate their Alpine traditions in everyday life. Shop for your own Dirndl dress and Lederhosen leather pants, or celebrate “Heimatwochen” (local weeks) in July and August by mingling in colorful tents and tasting local delicacies. Join the crowds to watch costumed processions, see Bavarian folk dance performances and hit the dance floor yourself. Only 15 miles away is the Zugspitze – at 9,718 feet, Germany’s highest peak – a popular hiking and winter sport destination with unforgettable views over the Alps.

gapa.de

Innsbruck  

Innsbruck is where rugged Alpine nature meets modern urban lifestyle. The capital of the Alps may be 800 years old and boast one of the most beautiful baroque and gothic centers in Europe, but it is also young and vibrant. Nowhere else can you shop in an historic medieval city center and, 20 minutes later, be in a mountain restaurant 6,500 feet high. The charming city is also the only site to have hosted Olympic Winter Games three times! Attend one of the countless cultural events in summer and enjoy the baroque music of the Innsbruck Festival of Early Music, or the beautiful waltz melodies of the Imperial Palace concerts. Breathtaking views, cutting-edge architecture, a shopping paradise along the newly redesigned Maria-Theresien-Strasse, numerous museums, cultural events and countless culinary delights, complete the Innsbruck experience.

innbruck.info
Kitzbühel has no shortage of glorious venues for staying and eating, but few rise above the rest – such as Relais & Châteaux Rosengarten in Kirchberg/Tirol, owned and managed by Simon Taxacher, one of Austria’s most lauded chefs. Also recommended, the Petit Tirolia at the Grand Tirolia Kitzbühel, where a young and modern cuisine merges with high-quality regional ingredients. rosengarten-taxacher.com, grand-tirolia.com

Kitzbühel’s hospitality knows no equal. The best in town: the Relais & Châteaux Hotel Temmerhof, a centuries-old farmhouse whose rooms feature wonderful Austrian décor. (Don’t miss the Michelin starred and Gault-Millau 16-point dining experience.) Then there’s the Weisses Rössl Kitzbühel with its stylish, Alpine luxury. A boutique hotel in the mold of an old farmhouse inn is the Hotel Schwarzer Adler, the award-winning spa features an outdoor pool with underwater sound system, counter-current swimming and a rooftop bar. hotelzurtenne.com, adlerkitz.at, roesslkitz.at

The Salzburgerland region is an organic food pioneer. Nowhere in Europe is the proportion of organic farmers higher and Salzburgerland has more outstanding gourmet restaurants than anywhere else in Austria. A local favorite is Schloss Kammer in Maishofen, a family-run castle hotel and restaurant famous for serving local delicacies. The gourmet temples are Mayer’s Schloss Prielau and the Salzburgerhof, but don’t miss Obauer in Werfen. Hubertus in Faim Pass and Döllerer’s Genusswelten in Golling – all within an hour of Zell am See. schlosskammer.com, schloss-prielau.at, salzburgerhof.at obauer.com, joehannamaier.at, doellerer.at

From bluer-than-blue Lake Zell to the snow-white peaks of the Hohe Tauern mountains to its charming village center, Zell am See is made for the active traveler. In summer, dive into the lake, cycle the picturesque shores or search out the best mountain views. Enjoy Zell am See’s renowned spa and wellness facilities and its innovative organic culinary movement. The towering Schmittenhöhe boasts perhaps the most beautiful vista of any Austrian mountain, with views of 30 different 10,000-foot peaks, plus the lake, the river basin and the entire Saalach Valley. The new cable car from Porsche Design zips to the top, where a high-altitude promenade awaits. Sculptures dot the paths of one of Europe’s largest art spaces, covering more than 450 acres across the mountain. zellamsee-kaprun.com

A century ago Zell am See was a tiny market village. In time the village grew, becoming a city in 1928. Today the lovely spot has grown to almost 10,000 inhabitants and offers a wide variety of entertainments, events and local festivities. Staying at the Salzburgerhof or the Romantikhotel Zell am See puts it all within striking distance. Just outside of Zell am See lies the picturesque castle Schloss Prielau, with stunning views over the lake and the mountains salzburgerhof.at, romantik-hotel.at, schloss-prielau.at

National Park Hohe Tauern by Train. The narrow-gauge Pinzgau train, vintage 1898, offers a romantic trip through the gorgeous Upper Pinzgau landscape – and a gateway to the stunning Hohe Tauern National Park, the largest in Austria. Start in Zell am See and take the train to Mittersill where you can visit the National Park Center with its top-notch exhibits. Or take a leisurely day hike with a ranger. Thirty hikes, ranging from easy to difficult, are available in summer, and the National Park Center is open daily. nationalpark.at

Pinzgauer Train © Pinzgauer Lokalbahn

Kitzbühel

Lifestyle meets tradition meets the mountain - this is Kitzbühel. Uniquely situated in the “airport triangle” of Munich, Salzburg and Innsbruck, this elegant town in the heart of the Alps is easy to reach. The synergy of old and new plays throughout its hotels, restaurants and infrastructure. The historic section of the town is 700 years old – ideal for strolling through Tirol’s most beautiful outdoor shopping center and enjoying the traditional cozy Austrian coffee houses. The picturesque inner town has a great selection of international and local boutiques, and the density of top hotels and award-winning restaurants makes “Kitz” a favorite destination for those who seek out the finer things in life.

Kitzbuehel.com
“Salzburg is the heart of the heart of Europe,” the poet Hofmannsthal declared, and a few steps in this beloved arts center reveal why. From a rich classical music heritage to today’s cutting-edge Walk of Modern Art, from top-shelf music festivals to the Museum der Moderne Salzburg, the city offers cultural experiences at every turn. Mozart’s Birthplace offers insights into the composer’s life and the Salzburg of the mid-1700s. Meanwhile it was through “The Sound Of Music” that the Pegasus sculpture and the hedge maze reached worldwide fame, but the gardens of Mirabell Palace have dazzled strollers for centuries. Salzburg Festival Mozart Week, Easter Festival and Whitsun Festival are all cherished – but with over 250 performances in 45 days, the summer Salzburg Festival is unrivaled.

Salzburg

Austria

EAT

Shady beer gardens, traditional coffeehouses, gourmet restaurants, trendy bars and cozy inns invite epicures to wine and dine in Salzburg. The rich diversity of restaurants in the city caters to the palate of gourmets, those with a sweet tooth and night owls alike. Our personal tips include the award-winning restaurants Riedenburg and Eszimazer, the locally beloved Auerhahn and Salzburg’s culinary temple with a reviving chef residency, the Hanperg.

Culinary Salzburg © Michaela Schwarcz-Schulz

Salzburg.info

GRAND HOTEL ORPHEEOSscher, goldenerhirsch.com, hotel-blaue-gans-salzburg.at

Inside the cathedral © Domuseum zu Salzburg, Josef Kral

sacher.com, goldenerhirsch.com, hotel-blaue-gans-salzburg.at, whose 600-year-old walls boast a wonderful art collection.

Sacher Hotel © Michaela Schwarcz-Schulz

THE SCHARFENBERG DISTRICT

For centuries Salzburg was governed by mighty prince-archbishops, the spiritual and worldly rulers of the city. Their influence on the city’s culture and economy knew no bounds. Today, you can explore the former center of their power, the DomQuartier Salzburg. For the first time in 200 years, the entire complex is accessible to the public. Tour the private and public spaces that testify to the prince-archbishop’s vast influence. Open daily, except Tuesdays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Domquartier.at

Regensburg

Germany

Because it has been maintained almost in its original form since the 8th century, the Old Town of Regensburg has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2006. The fourth largest city of Bavaria and best preserved medieval city in Germany, 80 miles northwest of Munich, is not to be missed. Here legendary Bavarian hospitality meets spectacular historic buildings from the Middle Ages. St. Peter’s Cathedral dates back to 700 AD and is the only example of French Gothic architecture in Bavaria. The 11th century Stone Bridge across the Regnitz river is the only preserved arch-bridge of its kind in Germany.

regensburg.de

EAT

Dine face-to-face with the Regensburg Cathedral at the historical Haus Heuport. Here you can relish a fusion of Bavarian, European and Asian cuisines, all made with local produce; the wine and beer pairings are terrific. Or try Bavarian cuisine sight unseen: The Regensburger Ratskeller makes use of its historic setting for a dining-in-the-dark experience. Rely exclusively on your taste buds!

Regensburg Beer Garden with View of Cathedral © Regensburg Tourismus

heuport.de, regensburger-ratskeller.de

Hotel Goliath sits in the heart of Regensburg’s Old Town. Each of the four-star rooms has a distinct design – you can even choose your favorite color. Breakfast and snacks are served all day, and the historic restaurant Bischofshof is just next door. Four-star Hotel Orphee, a three-minute walk from the cathedral and the Stone Bridge, occupies three locations, one of them an old warehouse for salt storage. Each building offers uniquely furnished rooms in baroque and antique styles.

Hotel Goliath © Hotel Goliath

heuport.de, regensburger-ratskeller.de

grandhotel-orphee.de, hotel-goliath.de, hotel-orphee.de

Inside the cathedral © Domuseum zu Salzburg, Josef Kral

1000 Years of Post History in the Thurn und Taxis Palace

The princess of Thurn and Taxis founded the first large-scale postal service, back in the 18th century. She had built a magnificent castle, the Thurn and Taxis Palace, which has more rooms than the Buckingham Palace. Gawk at the palace’s ornate ballroom and marble staircase, as well as the treasure chamber and the carriage museum. Located in the picturesque green belt that surrounds the Old Town of Regensburg.

thurnundtaxis.de

The Grand Hotel © Hotel Orphee

Rothenthunen by Hotel Orphee

Regensburg Stone Bridge and cathedral © Regensburg Tourismus

Galerie Walk in Salzburg’s Cathedral District

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Domquartier.at

ancient wooden floors or walls of modern art. Rustic furniture or baroque design. Whether you prefer a five-star hotel in the Old City or a comfortable farm on the outskirts, you’ll find the perfect accommodations in Salzburg. Three top choices: the family-run Sacher Hotel with stunning views over the Old Town, the traditional yet Alpine-chic Hotel Goldener Hirsch and the Blaue Gans, whose 600-year-old walls boast a wonderful art collection.

Sacher Hotel © Michaela Schwarcz-Schulz

SACHSHER, goldenerhirsch.com, hotel-blaue-gans-salzburg.at

SACHSHER, goldenerhirsch.com, hotel-blaue-gans-salzburg.at

Grand Hotel © Hotel Orphee

It’s not just the cultural treasures that leave their mark on Salzburg – the family-run sacher.com, goldenerhirsch.com, hotel-blaue-gans-salzburg.at

Haus Heuport. Here you can relish a fusion of Bavarian, European and Asian cuisines, all made with local produce; the wine and beer pairings are terrific. Or try Bavarian cuisine sight unseen: The Regensburger Ratskeller makes use of its historic setting for a dining-in-the-dark experience. Rely exclusively on your taste buds!

Hangar-7 and Salzburg’s culinary temple with a revolving chef residency, the Auerhahn

Hangar-7 and Salzburg’s culinary temple with a revolving chef residency, the Auerhahn
Nuremberg

Germany

Founded circa 1050, Nuremberg is one of the oldest cities in Germany and offers wonderful exploring to the amateur history buff. Contemporary Nuremberg has a population of 500,000 and is easily accessible by airplane, car or high-speed trains. Its Old Town and exhibition grounds make it an abiding draw for tourists. The old town, with the churches of St. Lawrence and St. Sebald, is divided in two by the Pegnitz river. The Dürer Haus is northern Europe’s only remaining home of a Renaissance artist. Between 1509 and 1528 the great Albrecht Dürer created his artwork here. Nuremberg is also home to the most famous German Christmas market, the Christkindlesmarkt: a truly memorable holiday shopping experience.

tourismus.nuernberg.de

Besides the Nuremberg bratwurst, the city is famous for its tasty gingerbread. This traditional baked delicacy is made with honey, cloves, cinnamon, anise and ginger – a sweet and spicy treat best enjoyed at the Christkindlesmarkt. It comes plain or chocolate-coated. For year-round enjoyment visit the Nuremberg gingerbread factory in the city’s southeast.

tubezschmidt.com

The Romantikhôtel Messerschmitt’s wine tradition dates to 1422, when a local sailor brought a barrel of wine and established a wine house. Today, a whiff of that history can be found in the wine cellar of the family hotel, founded by airplane pioneer Willy Messerschmitt. Or stay at four-star Welcome Hotel Residenzschloss, on the bank of the river Regnitz, just a short walk to the historic Old Town. Built in 1787, the hotel now blends baroque and modern design.

tel: +49 911 80 60, welcome-hotels.com

With its narrow alleys, medieval and baroque buildings and picture-perfect sights, Bamberg is one of the most beautiful places in Bavaria. The Old Town is Europe’s largest and oldest intact city center, having been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993; the history of this town goes back to the 9th century. Meanwhile, just as appealing to some is Bamberg’s beer culture. With nine brewerries, it wasn’t long before the nickname “beer city” was born. Never fear, wine lovers: A fine glass of something regional isn’t hard to find here, and enjoyed over an exquisite dinner at one of the numerous small cafes and bars within the Old Town. Bamberg is located in the north of Bavaria, only 150 miles from Munich.

bamberg.info

The Das Eckerts prepares their delicacies strictly with produce from within a 60 mile radius. This ensures fresh, local and seasonal food. The interior is thoroughly modern – local oak wood, leather, limestone and sandstone – and designed to reflect the characteristics of the surrounding Franconian region. A highlight: the cooking classes, which teach the preparation of seasonal Franconian dishes.

das-eckerts.de

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bamberg.info

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das-eckerts.de

The five-star Sheraton Carlton Hotel Nuremberg is located in the heart of the city center, the old town and the market square just steps away. The recently renovated Bayerischer Hof Erlangen dates back to 1894, when it was a theater and restaurant. The hotel’s current restaurant, Rosmarin, was awarded 15 points by Gault Millau and puts local produce to use in its regional and Mediterranean cuisine.

sheratonnuernberg.com, bayerischer-hof-erlangen.de
Rothenburg

Rothenburg ob der Tauber is located 130 miles north-west from Munich and is situated at the scenic crossing of the Romantic Road and the Castle Road. Founded in 1142 AD, it’s been a free imperial city since 1274, and its location and rampart made it the most important town of the Middle Ages. The town lies between the two international airports of Frankfurt and Munich, making it relatively easy to get here. Rothenburg is one of Bavaria’s hotspots for tradition, medieval history – and Christmas. The famous Kathe Wohlfahrt Christmas Village and the Christmas museum are must-sees at this beautiful German town. The richness of the old medieval buildings and museums make it even more memorable.

tourismus.rothenburg.de

Roam the historic Old Town of Rothenburg and the medieval buildings at its center. The St. Jakobs Church is the tallest building there, its construction dating to 1331 and continuing until 1485. Stroll along the ramparts and see the 42 defense towers surrounding the city. A guided walk with the night watchman around town will transport you right back to the Middle Ages.
nightwatchman.de

Enjoy the four-star Vital Hotel Meiser, a family hotel outside of Rothenburg with impeccable attention to detail – and a terrific spa. Villa Mittermeier, right in Rothenburg, is one of Bavaria’s Sightsleeping Hotels that brings old traditions to a contemporary setting. And nestled in the picturesque center of town is the four-star Hotel Eisenhut, which often hosts royals.

vitalhotel-meiser.de, villamittermeier.de, eisenhut.com

Augsburg

Augsburg, located on the Romantic Road 30 minutes northwest of Munich, was founded by the Romans in 15 BC. There the oldest social housing complex, the Fuggerei, became home to the needy citizens of Augsburg. Founded by the wealthy Fugger family in 1516 it is still in use today. The Cathedral and Renaissance City Hall with the Golden Hall deserves a visit – famed for its murals, it’s one of the most important cultural monuments of the German Renaissance. Today the hall is frequently used for receptions and concerts. The city isn’t without its historic celebrity connections - Mozart and Brecht, notably. Today Augsburg is home to many technical colleges, bringing a vibrant student life into the Renaissance town.
augsburg-tourismus.de

At the Fuggerei, a remarkable history of the world’s oldest social housing complex unfolds. Explore how residents lived half a millennium ago, and how residents live there now. The current inhabitants are happy to talk with visitors about life there. For many, the Fuggerei area is a recovery haven in the city. During your tour a stop in the Fuggerei Stube is highly recommended.
fuggerei.de

Hotel Schamp combines classical design with functionality in its four-star establishment. Also combined: European and Asian cuisine, in their exceptional restaurant. The four-star hotel Steigenberger Drei Mohren has a 500-year history, and a location convenient to the best sights. Its 2011 renovation features contemporary design throughout its spacious rooms and suites, and the restaurant and bar have become popular among Augsburg residents.
hotelschamp.de, steigenberger.com

Restaurant die Ecke © Restaurant die Ecke

feinkost-kahn.de, restaurant-die-ecke.de

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hotel-schamp.de, steigenberger.com

Rothenburg

Enjoy the four-star Vital Hotel Meiser, a family hotel outside of Rothenburg with impeccable attention to detail – and a terrific spa. Villa Mittermeier, right in Rothenburg, is one of Bavaria’s Sightsleeping Hotels that brings old traditions to a contemporary setting. And nestled in the picturesque center of town is the four-star Hotel Eisenhut, which often hosts royals, celebrities and politicians, and offers exquisite views of Rothenburg and the Tauber valley.

vitalhotel-meiser.de, villamittermeier.de, eisenhut.com

Rothenburg night watchman © Rothenburg Tourismus Service

EAT

The Landwehr brewery has been brewing beer atop the Taubertal Valley since 1755. The owner shares with his guests not just his beloved brews, but his love for antiquate and his attention to detail. The restaurant is known for its hospitality, friendliness and award-winning cuisine. Homemade beer and Franconian wines are both paired with the seasonal and locally sourced meals.
landwehr-braeu.com

Hotel Eisenhut © Hotel Eisenhut

Restaurant Die Ecke brings a Mediterranean touch to its Bavarian-Teutonic meals. They feature aromas, spices and recipes from all over the world – but only the freshest local organic ingredients.
feinkost-kahn.de, restaurant-die-ecke.de

Augsburg

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hotelschamp.de, steigenberger.com

Feinkost Kahn offers gourmet meals and other local ingredients – partly via its restaurant and partly through its café and bistro, where you can get everything from a snack to a whole dinner.

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hotelschamp.de, steigenberger.com

Augsburg Town hall and cathedral by night © Regio Augsburg Tourismus GmbH

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tourismus.rothenburg.de
Munich – and its modern international airport – are the gateway to the German Alps. Over the centuries this cosmopolitan city has retained its beautiful Bavarian charm and traditions. You can experience top-notch shopping at Maximilianstrasse, one of the most exclusive areas in Munich. Planned by King Ludwig I, it’s home to the Bavarian Parliament, Maximilianeum, the National Theater and the Bavarian State Opera. Discover the BMW World, museum and factory for an in-depth take on the BMW brand and history. Munich is also considered the beer metropolis of the world, thanks to the Oktoberfest, the airport brewery and the array of iconic beer gardens. The city’s also home to no less than 12 Michelin-starred restaurants, featuring both Bavarian and international cuisine you won’t soon forget.
muenchen.de

Given all the beer it’s no surprise how popular Munich’s pretzels, sausages and chicken are. These traditional Bavarian delicacies represent one side of the culinary continuum, while the palate-pleasing haute cuisine scattered throughout town represent the other. From traditional Bavarian to Mediterranean, from French to Asian, the variety is matched only by the quality. muenchen.de

Munich’s finest hotels range from internationally renowned chains to local luxury hotels. The central Charles Hotel provides outstanding service, a rejuvenating spa and views of Munich’s old town and botanical gardens. The Mandarin Oriental Munich features a restaurant whose French-inspired Asian cuisine earned it a Michelin star. The restaurant Atelier, at five-star Hotel Bayerischer Hof, also boasts a Michelin star. Experience haute cuisine with an inspired wine list. bayerischerhof.de, thecharleshotel.com, mandarinoriental.com

Oberammergau, an hour south of Munich, is world famous for its “Passion Plays,” which take place every ten years. Depicting the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, the performances have been ongoing since 1634. During the years in between, you can nevertheless get a taste with a backstage tour of the theater. For a more permanent sense of local art, note the gorgeous frescoes on house walls, called “Lüftlmalerei.” Their origins date back to the Baroque epoch. ammergauer-alpen.de

Wishing you a great journey through the Austrian, Swiss and German Alps!